

Music & Letters

A Quarterly Publication

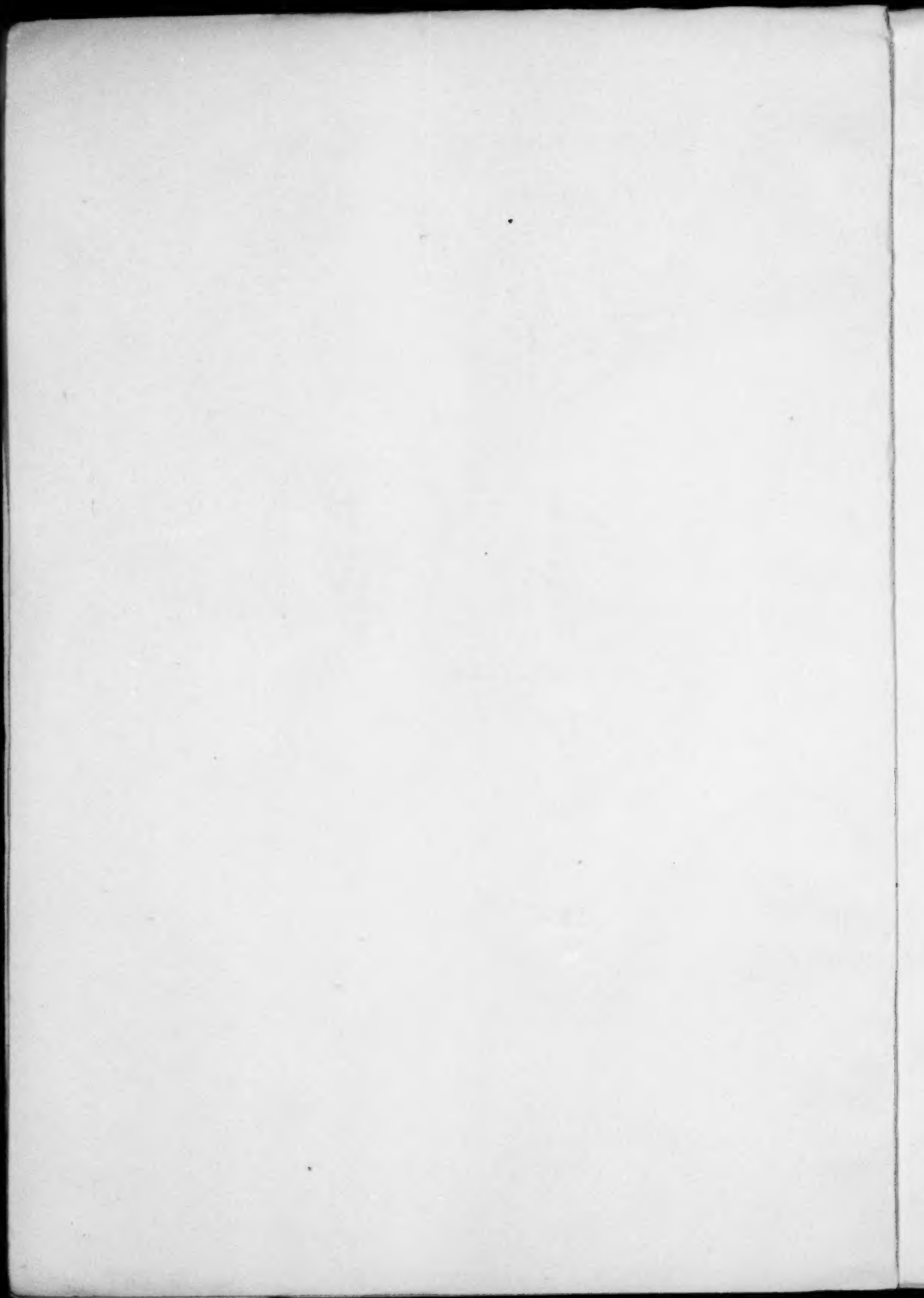
CONTENTS

Frontispiece—Sir Charles Stanford	. William Rothenstein
Poem—Gervase Elwes	. J. H. F. McEwen
Stanford's Songs	. H. Plunket Greene
Lodewyk Mortelmans	. Leo van Riel
Artists and Concert Life	. B. Huberman
Violoncello Playing	. Guilhermina Suggia
Neglected Treasures in Handel's	
Operas	. C. F. Crowder
A Note on Purcell's Music	. G. E. F. Arkwright
A Concert Audience and Its	
Points of View	. Paul Edmonds
The Heroic in Art	. John Drinkwater
The Dante Sexcentenary of 1865	. Mary Bradford Whiting
Reviews of Books, etc.	

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SIR CHARLES STANFORD

From a drawing by William Rothenstein

Music and Letters

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A DEAD SINGER

So then is ended the last song of all
And sweetest last, for there is no recall.
For he, whose voice was instant at the gate
Of Paradise, blessed importunate,
Is entered in ; henceforward he shall sing
That song to which his own, foreshadowing,
On earth was ever nearest. Now remain
Only the vibrant echoes for our pain,
Athwart our soundless night a starry wake.
But he, most happy, as a child may break
In mid-play from his fellows even to creep
Into a mother's arms, did fall asleep,
Nor knew the reason why. For evermore
Safe come at last unto his native shore
Whereto no sigh may follow nor one tear,
It shall be his to hear,
In slumbrous lapse of cadent harmony
On beaches everlasting, that far sea.

J. H. F. McEWEN.

SIR CHARLES STANFORD

IN presenting to our readers a portrait of Sir Charles Stanford we propose not to discuss a life so many-sided or an influence so far-reaching, but only to enumerate some of the aspects of his work which lie there for discussion.

For nearly half a century he has been doing three things—composing, teaching and conducting. Of all the kinds of composition he would probably say that his favourite is, as it was with his fellow-countrymen Balfe and Wallace, opera. Like them, his chief gift is melody; unlike them, he has not made fame as violinist or singer, nor has he as yet turned gentleman-farmer or set up in the bush. He invented—or, since nobody “invents” anything, he bethought himself of—the Cantata, and his *Revenge* was the precursor of many, from his own and other pens, that have provided English choral societies with a good reason for their existence. There is hardly any branch of the art which he has not tried, unless it be a set of vocal waltzes; and he may, as likely as not, repair that omission to-morrow. No Irishman could be a composer and not write songs; and that one most typical part of his work we will, indeed, discuss—but will set an Irishman to do it.

A man who writes must have in his mind some reader. A composer asks himself—less often, perhaps, than he ought, for the consideration of the answer to that question lies more naturally with the performer—for whom his music is intended. Still, Sir Charles answered recently in words—“it is of no use to write music only for the highly cultivated ear.” This is the answer that artists in all ages have given, when they said they wished to be judged by their contemporaries; the only difference is that he acts up to it. Other answers he has given, sometimes at his own expense, in deeds; but as he has said nothing about them, we will not either.

In his teaching he has always set his face against cheapness or scamping or low ideals. Beyond the steady watch over matters of technique, in which the teacher's function is, as he says, “mainly to give hints as to what to avoid,” and is in any case limited to precept, he has given much that precepts do not cover, and while “leaving the constructive element to the pupil's own initiative,” has, by some virtue that has gone out of him, in part determined what that initiative should be. He has maintained a militant rectitude towards music, which has sometimes been misunderstood by the many, but which the

few have always prized. In orchestral practices he has, before now, unconsciously filled boys with terror and reduced girls to tears; but no one could make more ample amends than he has known how to make with a wayward jest or an unpublished kindness. There are many of our composers, both past and present, who have benefited by his direct instruction, and not a few of them whom he has helped with timely advice. His *Musical Composition* (1911) is remarkable no less for its omission of the irrelevant than for its insistence on the practical. One way or other his influence on education has been the outstanding thing in the music of our day. He has not left the ranks of the combatants for a position of greater ease and less responsibility, but has always been a fighting parent for his children-in-music.

Sir Charles has seen men and cities. He knew Brahms and Joachim, v. Bülow and Saint-Saëns. He has been associated with many festivals here and abroad, been welcome as the chairman of many committees, and has championed many causes. Books like *Studies and Memories*, with its graceful dedication, and others show that he can write down the impressions left by this wide outlook with a man of the world's wit and a scholar's pen.

But it is time now that this Saxon view of work of such range and versatility should warm into the Celtic vision, and that the words of an acquaintance should take a deeper colour from the voice of a friend.

STANFORD'S SONGS

THERE is nothing more difficult to write than a critical essay on the work of a contemporary. The vocabulary of appreciation is worn threadbare, and is further suspect as being inspired and coloured by the personal predilections or prejudices of the writer. The perspective is limited to the lifetime of both parties concerned, and there is nothing to tell us definitely whether the work will stand the acid test of time. Durability is the one proof-positive of its soundness, and who can positively say what will endure? Each generation claims, and proclaims, its own immortality and the inevitable disintegration of its immediate predecessor. It is the saddest thing in art that the child disowns its parents. The rung of the ladder which the foot has just left is invariably rotten; yet it has helped the climber a step nearer the stars. Partisanship is the parasite of progress; the average reader is asked, with or against his will, to assimilate the coloured view of the school to which the writer happens to belong.

But there is one individual, and only one, in music who can approach the subject from a new and less prejudiced point of view, and that is the interpreter. He is the *tertius gaudens*, the sole beneficiary in the family quarrel, for he is out to get the best of everybody in every sense of the word. His technical standards are ready made for him in the scope of his instrument, and he has a vast literature in his own subject, built upon the same foundation, on which to form his taste and make his comparisons in idiom. It is this very scope of his instrument which is his safeguard and makes his views dependable; for the work of a composition, if it cannot be played or sung, is *nil*, and he is the judge. His *bona fides* is above question by all the rules of common sense; for altruism is a poor substitute for bread, and if for friendship's sake he tries to force upon the public music in which he does not himself believe, he is bound sooner or later—in the language of our cousins—"to come up against the door of the poorhouse with a dull thud."

The interpreter in song stands alone in his art in that his vocal instrument has never varied in its structure, and its technique has remained comparatively unaltered from time immemorial. The potentialities of the voice are the same in the twentieth century as they were in the sixteenth, and the composers of each period have had the same material to work with. The Ballade in G minor could never have been written in the days of the clavichord, but the tenor (if it was a tenor) who sang "Have you seen but a whyte lillie growe" could have sung the Forging Songs from *Siegfried* equally well so far as his apparatus was concerned. The singer by this very immutability

of his means has but one technical standard by which to measure his music, and for him the paramount question is—Does the writer of the song know the instrument for which he is writing? If not, his labour is in vain.

Let me say at once that in the matter of Stanford's songs I, too, am a partisan. I could not very well be otherwise, seeing that I have been present at the birth of all the song-cycles from the "Irish Idyll" to "The Songs of the Fleet," and many of the miscellaneous songs as well. These have contained for me all that I want in song—lilt, rhythm, sense of words, sense of atmosphere, musical imagery and illustration, directness of purpose and—guiding them all—imagination, humour and economy.

But in one thing Stanford stands in a place by himself. I say unreservedly, in the light of a pretty wide acquaintance with the anthology of song, that in his knowledge of the handling of the voice he stands higher than any writer since Schubert. In all the years I have sung his songs I can never remember having had to ask him to alter a passage or note on account of technical difficulty. That knowledge was no doubt absorbed in his childhood. His father was a famous amateur bass singer in Dublin in the days of the great Italians, and was the personal friend of Lablache, who taught him the part of Leporello and spoke of him as his "second self." He sang *Elijah* in 1847 in Dublin, and *The Creation* and *St. Paul and Samson*, because he was better than any professional they could get. His fame there is abiding. It is no wonder that singing should have no secrets for his son.

In the wide range of Stanford's songs, from grave to gay, there is not one that is not ridiculously easy to sing, and that is the highest tribute you can pay to workmanship. Why are the "Sea-Songs" and the "Fleet-Songs" sung every day throughout the country? Because the composer knew how to bring them within the scope of every singer who knew his business—not by writing down to him, but by his intimate knowledge of his instrument. He knows, too, that that instrument is melodic and horizontal and that the true song *never stops*. There are no waste-spaces—the hall-mark of the amateur—in his songs, no empty streets with dogs snuffing in the dustbins. The battleship in "Homeward Bound" moved on as surely to Dover as the "Old Superb" to Trinidad. Steam or sail, thirty knots or five, they *never stopped*. Schubert knew it too. There are no waste spaces in "Der Erbkönig" or "An die Musik" or "Das Lied im Grünen." Go to the greatest song in the world, "Der Doppelgänger," the very embodiment of silence, of immobility, of trance, of death in life. Here, if ever, we should find the *fermata* in possession; yet it moves ever on inexorable, throbbing, *alive*, without a pause, to the great despair. Just a few chords, a few declamatory sentences ordered and joined with an almost supernatural economy of means, the same

economy which is conspicuous in such modern songs as Butterworth's "Requiescat" or Boughton's "Immanence," and which is as much the secret of art as it is of nature.

This Schubertian economy of effort is inherent in all Stanford's songs and goes hand in hand with the rapidity with which he writes. I remember once sending him the tune and words of "Molly Brannigan," which I had just received from Miss Galwey, with a peremptory demand for its immediate "arrangement" and return. It went off at 9 a.m. and was back in my house in its present setting, tune, text, arrangement and transport complete, at 11.30—in about the time I should have taken to copy the notes. The setting is simplicity itself, it is true, but absolutely appropriate. It could have been done in the time only by a writer whose technical expression was so spontaneous as to be involuntary.

Dr. Alcock has told me of an even more remarkable instance of this. He asked him one day at the Royal College if he could make an orchestral setting of his chant to the 150th Psalm for a special Festival performance at Salisbury Cathedral. He gave him the chant at 2 o'clock and got it back, fully scored (in groups), verse by verse, at 3.

There is something fascinating in this power of going direct for what you want to say and saying it in the fewest number of notes without stopping to think how you do it. It brings all the qualities I have spoken of above within the play of the composer's imagination and enables him to dress them up and exploit them in turn or together as members of one big happy family. What could be more exhilarating than the swish of the bellows in "A Fire of Turf" or the sailing of the ships at dawn in the first of the "Fleet-Songs"; more intoxicating than the rhythm of "Devon, O Devon," or "The Old Superb," or "The Fair"? For mastery of words what could beat "To the Soul" or "Tears" or "Grandeur" or "Did you ever?" or "The little Admiral" or "A Soft Day"? They seem to be speech glorified—what song should be—exalted to high music with an uncanny ease, and with the same spontaneity of expression as the widely differing songs of sheer drama such as "La belle Dame sans merci" and the "Corsican Dirge."

Of all Stanford's songs perhaps the best known is the "Fairy Lough" from the "Irish Idyll." Both the famous poem and the music are classics by now. I doubt if there is another pianoforte-song in existence which contains so much imagery and musical illustration in a short space. I should like to show how it strikes the singer who looks at it from within, though at the end of it the reader may wonder what the singer has to do with it. It is not widely sung because the average singer, alas! does not realise that his only place in music is to deliver a message. The analysis is my own, and made without consultation with the composer, and does not profess to be anything but an imaginative picture inspired by the music.

THE FAIRY LOUGH.*

Loughareema! Loughareema
 Lies so high among the heather;
 A little lough, a dark lough,
 The wather's black an' deep.
 Ould herons go a-fishin' there,
 An' sea-gulls all together
 Float roun' the one green island
 On the fairy lough asleep.

Loughareema, Loughareema;
 When the sun goes down at seven,
 When the hills are dark an' airy,
 'Tis a curlew whistles sweet!
 Then somethin' rustles all the reeds
 That stand so thick an' even;
 A little wave runs up the shore
 An' flees, as if on feet.

Loughareema, Loughareema!
 Stars come out, an' stars are hidin';
 The wather whispers on the stones,
 The flittherin' moths are free.
 One'st before the mornin' light
 The Horsemen will come ridin'
 Roun' an' roun' the fairy lough,
 An' no one there to see.

MOIRA O'NEILL.

He, the composer, with his intimate knowledge of values, saw that the singer, however great his self-restraint and command of colour, was too much of the earth earthy to paint that picture appropriately with his voice. Let him fight it as he would, he could not resist the temptation to show you the trees instead of the wood, and the audience would be conscious of his personality instead of the atmosphere of the song. If you read the poem through you will find that it is pervaded throughout by the spirit of remoteness. The little black lake lies so far away, so high among the heather, that the fairies and the sea-gulls and the herons have it all to themselves. You (the singer) are there by stealth, probably with the connivance of a Leprechaun. If you show in *your voice* that you are looking on, the herons will see you and flap off, the sea-gulls will wake up and the fairies will go home to bed. How then can the picture be painted? It is all there—in the accompaniment—whispered so gently, so subtly, that the audience holds its breath to hear; and not a fairy is the wiser.

*Messrs. William Blackwood and Sons and Messrs. Boosey and Co. have kindly given permission for the inclusion of the poem and of the musical extracts.

The "Fairy Lough" is a *berceuse*. It is rocked upon the little waves which carry the sleeping sea-gulls round and round the little green island for ever and ever.

First system of the musical score. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The lyrics are: "An' sea - gulls all . . . to - ge - ther Float". The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature. The melody is a simple, rocking tune.

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "roun' the one green is - land On the fair - y lough a - sleep. . .". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rocking melody.

Some of the waves are longer and deeper. When you first see the little black lake it seems to be breathing softly, almost imperceptibly.

Andante molto tranquillo.

Third system of the musical score. The tempo is marked *Andante molto tranquillo*. The piano accompaniment begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The melody is slower and more spacious than the previous systems.

Fourth system of the musical score. The piano accompaniment continues with a *poco* (poco) dynamic. The melody is still slow and tranquil.

But when they reach the shore they get very small, and run up the strand and back again and laugh under their breath.

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "e - ven; A lit - tie wave runs up the". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a flowing melody in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line in the left hand. A *ppp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking is present in the piano part.

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "shore An' flees,". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues the melody and accompaniment from the first system.

And as you watch them you hear the curlew calling in the sky high up above the dark hills.

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "When the hills are dark . . an' air - - y, 'Tis a". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a more active bass line with some triplets.

Fourth system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "cur - lew whis - tles sweet!". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues the accompaniment, ending with a final chord.

And down below you hear the water whisper o'er the stones at your feet, and the moths flitter round your head; and as the first light comes up in the East you hear the Horsemen gallop up to tell them the day is at hand, and ride off into the distance.

The wa - ther whis - pers on the stones, The

flit-ther-in' moths are free. One'st be-fore the morn-in'

ppp

light The Horse - men will come

ri - din' Roun' an' roun' the fair - y



And perhaps you will find the moment when you look away from the water and up at the sky and watch the stars come out; and later on the place where you stand up before you say "Goodbye." There is no more space to give the music here.

I spoke of the spirit of remoteness which is in the poem. The music is saturated with it. It is given to you in the F major chord in the very first bar. The C natural lifts you away from earth at once, and you find it constantly recurring throughout. It is the "colour" feature of the song and sets the atmosphere for the singer at the start.

There is not, and never was, a singer who would not wake the sea-gulls up if he made vivid what he saw. It has nothing to do with technique or virtuosity; it is simply the human element in the human voice which disqualifies it as a fairy illustrator. What, then, can be his share in the scheme? He can tell you under his breath that it is a *little lough* and a *dark lough*, and that the water's *black* and *deep*—by his colour; that the water *whispers* and the reeds *rustle* and the moths *flutter*—by his word-illustration; that the sea-gulls float round and round the little island with their heads under their wings, *spell-bound*—by his phrasing. He can help to tell you that the Horsemen are coming to announce the dawn—by his rhythm; and he can say "Goodbye" and again "Goodbye" on the two final "*Loughareemas*" as he steals back down the hill just before the D major chord (coming after the fairy far-off F major) tells you that the sun is up and the fairies are gone—each and every one of these a miniature of miniatures; but his real place in the song is just to say that the little lake "lies so high among the heather," that there's "no one there to see."

Three crowded minutes of imagination without a jostle anywhere! There is not a bar which is not painting the picture or adumbrating the atmosphere, each leading into the next with a perfection of sequence, a master-joinery so easy as to be laughable. There is not a chord or a note which you could pick out as having been used for a plank to carry you across the ditches. It floats on as unconcernedly as the sea-gulls themselves. And it is done within the compass of a miniature of miniatures, played and sung for the most part *pp*, where a stumble

or a splash would make you jump as though someone had thrown a stone into the water.

Let me point out again that the voice and the accompaniment do not paint the picture by turns. There are no alternating patches of colour; they do it together. Let the reader get the song and see for himself how every detail contributes to, and is lost in, the whole. It does not differ in this respect from any other true work of art. It happens to be a masterpiece capable of analysis and demonstration.

Let the young composer, too, take note that in this intimate illustrated tone-picture there are only four expression marks in the voice part, and those in the vital places. *O, si sic omnes!*

It is mastery of technique which gives that directness of purpose and rapidity in translating the idea into the written note of which I spoke above and which I have so often seen when these songs were in the making. The composer who has to make *detours* is on all fours with the singer who changes his words to suit his easy vowels. Music is about the only thing in the world in which the longest way round is not the shortest way home. I would ask the student especially to take Stanford's songs—at random if he likes—and study the pianoforte part. He will find that there is not a passage or chord in any of them which has not a definite meaning and which is not friends with its neighbour; and that technically it is as easy to play as the voice part is to sing. The only time I ever heard an aspersion cast upon his pianoforte technique was at a concert at the Æolian Hall, where he was accompanying me in the "Irish Idyll." Harold Samuel, who happened to be playing at the same concert, was turning over for him, and in the rapid ascending passage at the end of "Cuttin' Rushes" I distinctly heard behind me, *sotto voce*, in lightning thrust and parry, the words "Fake!" and "Liar!", neither being in the original text.

I wish there were space to analyse some of the other songs in the same way, to show the instant appeal they make to the interpreter—the "painted ship upon the painted ocean" of the "Middle Watch"; the nostalgia of "Corrymeela" and "Irish Skies"; the hypnotic trance of "La belle Dame sans merci"; the breathless drama of "The Corsican Dirge"; the shivers and smiles of "How does the wind blow?" the anticyclone and the collapse of the barometer in "The West Wind"; the broken heart of the "Broken Song"; the rippling brook of "Cuttin' Rushes"; the physical fatigue of "Blackberry-time"; the rocking of the "Boat Song"; the mysticism of "Drake's Drum"; the battle-cry of "Devon, O Devon"; the long rollers of "Homeward Bound"; the distances and symbolism of "The Pibroch"; the Schumannesque rhapsody of "The Call"; the Navy spirit of the "Little Admiral"; the home spirit of "Cushendall," with the curlews borrowed from the "Fairy Lough" (pure singing in *excelesis*); and the passionate dirge and triumph of "Fare-

well"—not touched on, suggested, adumbrated, but the spirit of each permeating the song as a whole as the breath of its body.

It would be easy to demonstrate the working of the big dramatic songs and show how the composer has given himself elbow-room and at the same time kept the song in the miniature form and the singer from getting out of hand. But drama tells its own story and is directly visible to the eye. In music it is subtlety not obviousness which is the mark of genius and appeals most to the interpreter who cares to look beneath the surface. I would ask the reader to consider "Grandeur," the first of the "Sheaf of Songs from Leinster." This is a soliloquy, pathetic and grimly humorous, a bare statement of fact for the most part, as far removed from paint and powder as the Mary Byrne of the truly wonderful poem. It is said to oneself, not sung to an audience, and its colour never changes, the colour which creeps into the voice which is on the verge of tears. Painting pictures here would be murder, and well the composer knew it. He left it to the words. There is only one piece of direct illustration in the whole of it, namely, where he suggests the wailing of the "keen," vivid enough at an Irish wake to rouse you out of any soliloquy. He knew that elaboration and ornament were as far removed from Mary Byrne in death as in life, so he just set the strings of emotion vibrating and left it to the singer.

The song is in this respect the antithesis of the "Fairy Lough," and just as subtle. I have quoted it for that reason, and because it as subtly discloses the humour which I believe to be the main driving power of everything he has written. He is the only British composer that I have ever come across whose humour is non-sporadic. Most of our song writers have written an odd song or two either frankly humorous or leaning towards humour, just to say they could do it. But it is part of Stanford's permanent mental outfit, and comes out in everything he writes. There is humour in Mary Byrne's lying-in-state, as there is in the little waves that run up the shores of the Fairy Lough (how Bach must have chuckled when he wrote the Fugue in G sharp minor!); in the curtsying of the tables in the roll of the Sou' wester; in the similar figure for the space-destroying stride of "Daddy Longlegs," and the quotation from the "Feuerzauber" when he burns his wings in the candle—not pointed out like most quotations, but flung out like a laugh as you ride by; in the shudders and heart-thumpings and sprints through the dark lanes of "Scared"; in the grim-comic analogies of "The Crow"; or in the threatenings and slaughters of "The Bold Unbiddable Child," with the two mighty smacks upon the culprit in the two final chords. Like his versatility, it is probably one of the products of the land of his birth, and none the worse for that. It makes a sympathetic appeal to his countryman, who once heard him say in a burst of righteous indignation in the card room, "I did lead my longest suit. They were all the same length."

This article deals only with his original songs; otherwise I could have shown how he has handled the setting of the traditional melodies. It is not too much to say that the whole school of "unselfish" folk-song arrangers is founded on his treatment of "The Songs of Old Ireland" and the other collections of Irish airs. It would be hard to beat "Sweet Isle" or "The little red Lark" or "Remember the Poor" for the setting of a jewel; or "The Alarm" or "Loved Bride of O'Byrne" for rhythmical expression of the primitive emotions. There is no branch of the art so dependent upon economy of technique. It was fortunate for us that he was there at the start to show us the way.

I said at the beginning that durability was the only sure test of soundness. Will the songs last? Well, "The radiant Dark" (1871), "La belle Dame sans Merci" (1876), "Blue Wings" (1879), "The Lute Song" (1875), "Prospice" (1880), the "Cavalier Songs" (1880), and the "Bower of Roses" (1877), are as fresh to-day as when they were born, and that is from 40 to 50 years ago; and these are but a few of many. There are no youthful indiscretions to make you blush when you stumble on them; no cheap resuscitations by the heartless publisher. Wherever you come across them, and whatever period they belong to, you find the same imagination served by the mind that was trained in the Greek and Latin classics and the hand that was trained in the workshop. Modern idiom may be different—as no doubt it should be, for idiom is inherently ephemeral and changes with every generation. But the great men of each remain, for there are no goodbyes in immortality. Time has shown us that genius schooled is independent of time or season, and that imagination and workmanship are the parents of every abiding work of art, whether it be a corbel from York Minster or a sword from Japan or a song from Ireland.

HARRY PLUNKET GREENE.

LODEWYK MORTELMANS

WHILE reading Mr. Vaughan Williams's fine essay on Gustav Holst in this Quarterly, the name of the Flemish composer Lodewyk Mortelmans came to my mind, as so many remarks on the English master can be applied to the Flemish one. Mortelmans, too, is a "modern" composer in the high sense Mr. Williams gives to that word, but neither he nor Gustav Holst are "fashionable," as they write "major ninths," and use muted strings and trumpets only when compelled to do so by their inspiration, and, not being fashionable, they get their works printed with difficulty, and are nearly unknown in the wide musical world.

As I consider it a very valuable privilege to be able to introduce a worthy countryman to foreigners apt to appreciate him, I shall not continue this essay without having first thanked the Editor for giving me this opportunity.

Lodewyk (Flemish for Lewis) Mortelmans, now about fifty-three years of age, is a native of Antwerp, born in the middle-class. He got his musical education at the School of Music under Peter Benoit, which has since become the Royal Flemish Conservatoire of Music. At the present time he is a highly-esteemed professor of counterpoint and fugue. Mortelmans is one of the few "Grands Prix de Rome" that have fulfilled the promise of their youth. He is an excellent pianist and as such an ideal interpreter of Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin. He is, moreover, a man of high culture, very widely read in Flemish and French; and great English authors such as Shakespeare, Byron, Tennyson, Thackeray, Dickens, Carlyle, Stevenson, Hardy, Kipling, Wells and Conrad are familiar to him through translations. As conductor of an orchestra he is unequalled in Belgium, but best and foremost of all, he stands as a composer. This I shall now try to prove.

His conscientiousness in everything he does makes of Mortelmans a rather slow worker, however quick a thinker he may be. Yet his "bagage musical" is far from unimportant, as a bird's-eye view of it will show. He began his career as a song-composer, and these songs were the first-fruits of a fame which is already high, and which, I trust, will still rise in times to come. In Belgium, at any rate, these romantic melodies made him popular with the composers of his own generation. They called him "the prince of song," and this praise

he merits even more abundantly for his later melodies. When, in 1899, some of his friends, with the practical help of the Belgian Government and the City of Antwerp, organised a *Festival Mortelmans* conducted by the young master, the song-composer *par excellence* turned out to be a symphonist likewise of indisputable masterly skill. He was then, indeed, the author of several short and one long symphonic poem and of a *Homeric Symphony* of perfect classical form. Since that time he worked at an opera *De Kinderen der Zee* (Children of the Sea) down to 1915. That beautiful work was produced for the first time last year at the Flemish Opera at Antwerp.

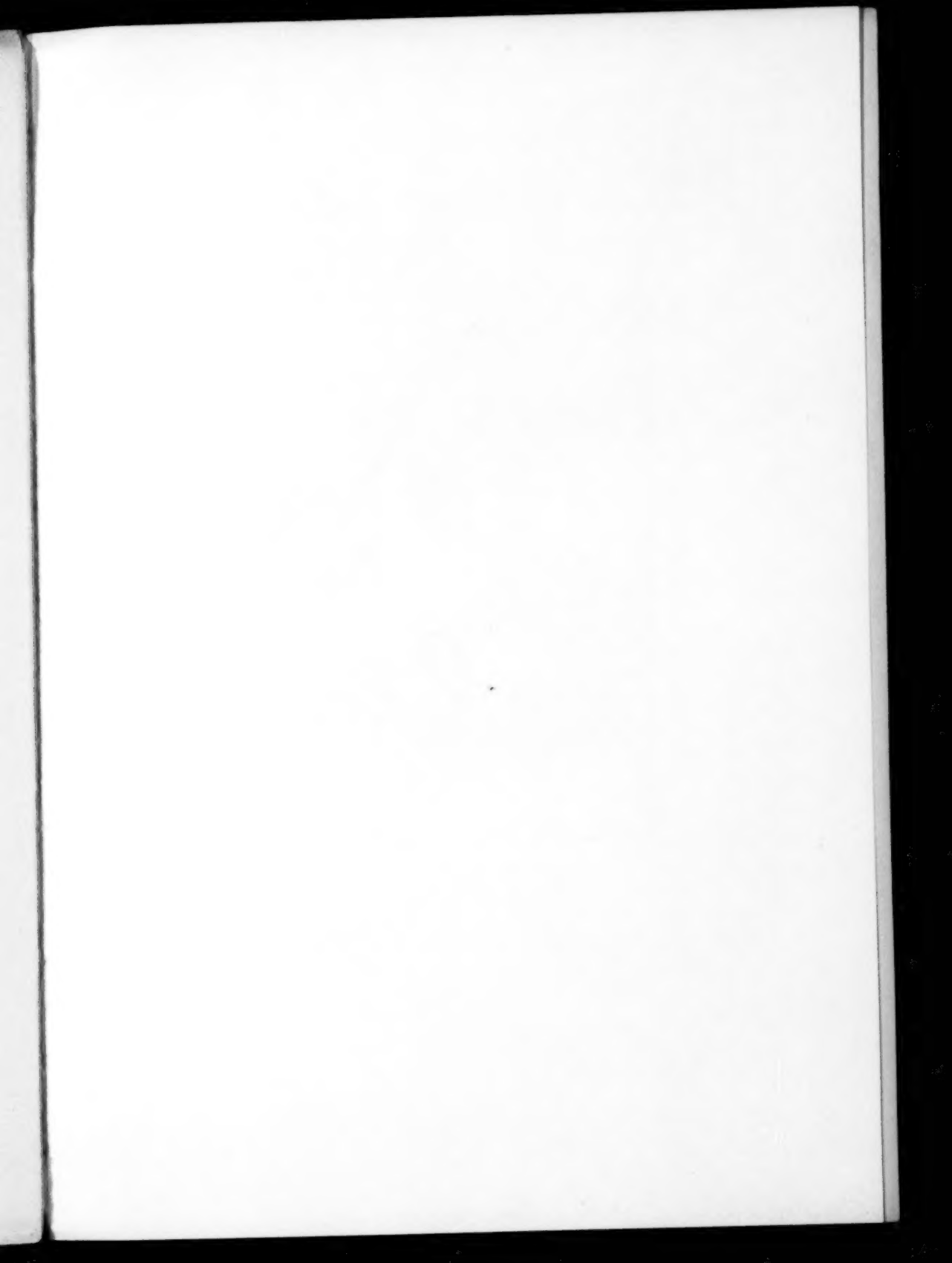
In 1899 he composed the first of his "Gezelle-songs," now famous in Belgium and Holland, beautiful interpretations of delightful little poems by Guido Gezelle (1830-1899), a Roman Catholic priest, the greatest lyrical poet of Flemish and Dutch literature.

On this or that occasion, or simply spontaneously, Mortelmans had composed a few "album-leaves" for the piano; during the war he felt himself, as a composer, more and more attracted by this instrument. He wrote *In Memoriam* for his late wife (d. 1917), a *Varied Minuet*, a *Bridal March* and *Uplifting of the Heart*. In 1919 and 1920 teaching made too heavy demands on his time, and left him little leisure for his inspiring walks in the country; nevertheless he wrote a *Grande Valse*, an *Elegy*, and about half a dozen "album-leaves."

And now that I have given a rough sketch of his life and a list of his principal works, I come to the more difficult part of my task—to give the features of Mortelmans's art. It will be more arduous for me and, maybe, at times more tedious for the reader, since, with the exception of the songs written before 1914 and the score of the *Homeric Symphony*, not a single work has been published. Familiar as I may be with most of them, I shall have to keep close to the examples I want to give, as my readers cannot test my contentions by the actual works.

Mortelmans's compositions are so many mirrors of his outer and inner life. He was an excellent husband and is a good father; he is a man of severe morals and a noble and sincere friend; during the German occupation and since, he has proved himself a passionate patriot; in short, he is "a man of one piece," as the Flemings say. And thus he is a composer "of one piece," a perfectly honest musician, composing only under inspiration, according to the rules of the craft and with unerring taste.

Poesy, rustic and lyrical, and distinction are the most striking features of Mortelmans's music. He is a child of nature. If an *Idyll of Sentiment* (a symphonic poem) is the outburst of a romantic young lover, the *Myth of Spring* and *Idyll of Spring* (also for orchestra) seem to have been written in a pleasant sunny meadow, while his





LODEWIJK MORTELMANS
(in 1893)

great symphonic poem *Helios* and the *Homeric Symphony*, notwithstanding myth and legend, sound like glorious lyrical hymns to Nature and her Creator. I mean that he is no "programme-musician," any more in his larger orchestral compositions than in his shorter ones; he turns in a wonderful way sentiments and impressions of men and things into music, but never tries to do so with men and things themselves. That may not be so "modern" as Strauss or Marinetti (how old this last name seems to me!), but it has the advantage of being musical.

But our "child of nature" is, as I have said already, a very civilised man of general culture (a rarity among artists), possessing an infallible taste. This he shows by the choice of his texts, better than by anything else, or rather by the way in which he uses those texts. For with Schumann or Schubert, Brahms or Grieg or Duparc, the music does not better reflect the expression of the words, nor is the blending of melody and harmony more perfect and satisfactory from all points of view than with Mortelmans. The melody, even if it is very easy and in a popular vein, like that of *Kindje, wat ben je toch zacht* (Baby, how sweet thou art)—a favourite with the singing public—is never banal nor vulgar, and the harmonization is never slovenly.

Andantino tranquillo. *dolce con amore.*

Kind - je, wat ben je toch zacht,

p dolce e con tenerezza.

Ped. * *con Ped.*

kep - je van tintel fijn goud . .

Mortelmans never composes but under inspiration, and does so according to the rules of the craft. But he is so skilful and clever a craftsman that he moves about at will in the entanglements of the severest counterpoint or the most complicated fugue. So he does not need the help of licentious harmonies and developments to look "interesting" or produce "effect" or to hide a lack of true inspiration; nor are the poesy and sentiment choked in the iron grip of the rules; everything follows logically and naturally upon the foregoing without ever being weak or insipid. To prove such a bold contention, it would be necessary to give a whole movement of a symphony, which, of course, is impossible. It must not be supposed that Mortelmans avoids on principle all unprepared or unresolved discords and musical licenses. Yet, with him, such elements of the music are never out of the picture. One of his latest works, *Stemmingsbeeld* ("rendering of the mood"), might be termed a very "modern" (fashionable sense!) thing if it were not so well-equilibrated.

As to "licenses," Mortelmans has some forbidden progressions of "fifths"; they are to be admitted as, for instance, M. Bruneau's in "*Le Rêve*," because they are beautiful; they occur in the song "Klokkenzang" (Song of the Bells):—



These fifths are not a curiosity or an extravagance, but as much an expression of beauty as the rest.

To put it plastically: if we are not on *terra firma* with Mortelmans, we have at least the impression of gently soaring; whereas with some of the moderns we have the uncomfortable feeling of hopping on one leg or of hanging in mid-air.

Down to his last works we may distinguish three periods in the songs of Mortelmans. The first is romantic and already shows that seductive lyricism which reigns in all his works. *Meisje met Uw*

Rozenmondje (Maiden with the rose-bud mouth), after Heine, is a fine example of it. This is the first sentence:—

Andantino espressivo. p

Mei-sje met Uw ro-zen-mon-dje

met Uw oog . . . jes zoet en klaar

and this is the beginning of the last--the actual proposal of the young lover:—

appass.

Aan mijn lip-pen wil . de ik druk-ken U-we

And although the latter may seem a little wild and exuberant, it is not uncontrolled; the "Stimmung" is as poetic as of a Schubert song and less melancholic than one of Schumann. This and the other melodies of that period are the songs of a healthy Flemish musician who is very much in love with the sweetest of Flemish girls.

To this period also belongs a French song on a poem of Baudelaire, *L'Ennemi*. It is known only to some intimate friends and they value it highly.

The second period has principally a rustic character, while the sentiment has deepened and become purer. Love has been satisfied and nature seems to claim her old rights to him. The unsurpassed music to the little poems of Guido Gezelle belong to this time. In the prelude of *'t Is de Mandel* ('Tis the Mandle) you hear the rippling of the water along the green slopes, and, in the middle, its more restful flowing.*

Moderato, quasi allegretto.



* The "Mandel" is a tiny rivulet, not more than a brook really, in West-Flanders.

Fragrant and peaceful as a rose-garden at evening is 't *Avondt* (The night draws nigh).



But the purest "pastoral" song of Mortelmans's is 't *Groeit een blomken* (A little flower is growing), of which the melodic theme runs like this:—



I cannot mention every work, and must needs pass by some of the best, such as the deeply religious 't *Pardoent* (The Angelus). Before passing on to the third period I wish to say a few words about the philosophical and poetical 't *Hoore tuitend hoornen* (I hear the horns blowing). The sense of the poem is as follows: "I hear the horns blowing, the night is near; children, come to me, the night is near for me." Mortelmans has given the deep meaning and sentiment of this little poem in such a striking way that it is impossible, when you know the song, to read the poem without hearing the music; here is the last sentence, which is, so to say, an epitome of the whole:—

(Lento misterioso con gravita.)

'k Hoore tuit . end' Hoor - - nen

en de na - vond is na - bij voor mij

en de na - vond is na - bij voor mij

As a rule, blitheness and contentment with what God has given is the undertone, if not the key-note, of all these works from first to last.*

The third period begins in a severer tone; without ever being grim, the voice of the composer sounds more earnest. It is thus that we hear it in a few religious songs to words by Gezelle, which can compete with the very finest of Bach himself. They are less contemplative, but

*Some songs of the first period have been published by G. Faes, Antwerp; twenty of the second (including a dozen Gezelle songs), by Alsbach and Co., Amsterdam, the latter with French and German translations. I may as well add that of most of the songs English translations by my wife and myself exist in MS.

more human and lyrical than Bach's. *O mocht ik* (Oh, might I stand before the holy shrine) begins as follows:—

Andante.

p poco cres. *poco mf* *dim.*

O mocht ik, O

espress.

mocht ik, voor't heil - lig ta - ber - na - kel staan, O

Nowadays we hardly ever find such a deep religious spirit combined with so much human feeling and perfect art.

During this period Mortelmans has more than once an irresistible outburst of enthusiasm, such as in *Hoe leutig* (How merry!), and

especially in *Meidag* (May-day), also to Gezelle's words, a song for soprano and orchestra, so radiant with sunshine and so well poised everywhere and in every sense, that I do not hesitate to call it a masterpiece. A couple of extracts will be more convincing than a wordy analysis. After a description of the cherry-tree on a May-day comes a reminiscence of winter:—

Ze win - ter was zyn schoon - heid als een

p

Ped. *

and soon the cherry-tree is in full blossom:—

Maar al dat . . . schoon is . . . al dat . . .

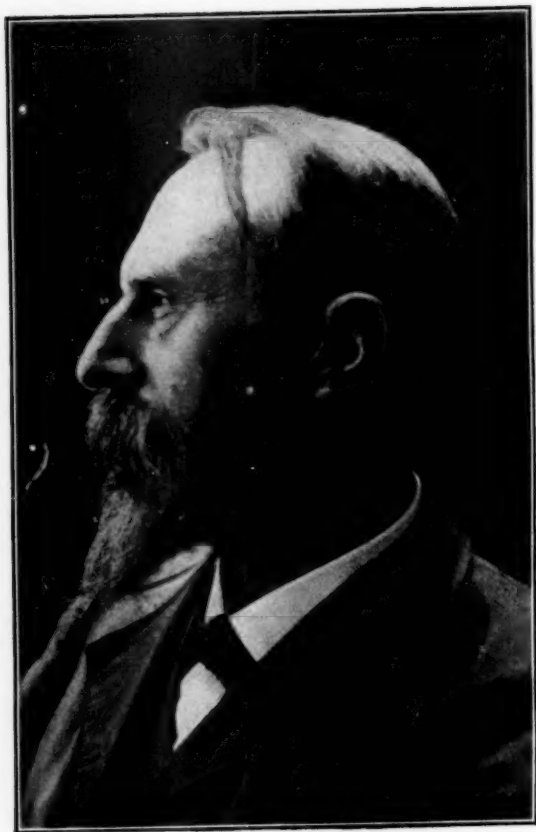
Con fuoco.

p

le - vend en dat lief . . . ge - tal . . .

p *Espress.* *f*





LODEWIJK MORTELMANS
(in 1918)

Mortelmans is indisputably the greatest composer of songs in Belgium, and, I feel sure, one of the best of modern times.

The music for the piano has developed in a way nearly similar to that of his songs—which, of course, is only natural. He is in love with love and life and music; and his first album-leaves, some of them timid, others passionate in expression, are the overplus of that love which had not found a way out into his songs. In short, they are so many "romances sans paroles," but even in those early days of a fine make and distinction.

The later piano-pieces are "pastorals": simple and charming lyrical impressions from Nature, which has found in Mortelmans an insatiable lover. Those little works also stand in close relation to the later songs.

The last piano-works come after the songs of the third period and contain new elements.

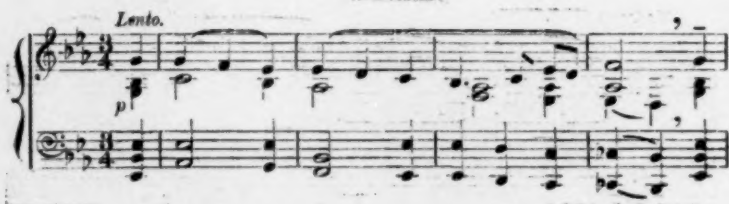
Fate has struck the strong man in a pitiless way: in less than a year's time he has lost his beloved wife (his "maiden with the rose-bud mouth") and two children in rather tragic circumstances. He has turned more and more unto his own soul, and the finest poems cannot help him any longer to utter the inexpressible. There are moments, though, in which his muse sings with a delightful gentleness and spurs him on to the achievement of a bewildering virtuosity; such is the case with his *Menuet varié*, which served, in 1918, as "morceau de concours" for the young pianists at the Brussels Conservatory. It is a work full of delightful charm and humour. The theme is delicacy itself:



and the variations, down to a strong polonaise and back again to the original, almost fragrant melody, are a feast for ear and mind. The *Bridal March*, which might also be taken as a concert-piece, is in the same optimistic vein, and its mood breathes his old love of country sights and sounds:



His compositions of these years show him to be in full possession of his craft and receptive to passing fancies of his mind, but also conscious of the sadness and loneliness of his inner life. He strikes a deeper note, and in his *Herdenking* (In memoriam), written in remembrance of his late "unforgettable" wife, he reaches a depth and a greatness which inevitably calls up the figure of the tortured Beethoven:



It is considered by many who know it to be one of the most perfect works of the present time.

Sadness, hitherto unknown, has come into Mortelmans's music. In the series of the *Three Elegies*, of which I mentioned already *In Memoriam* and *Uplifting of the Heart*, it appears in successive cumulation. Deep sorrow in the first, moving resignation in the second. The last, *Verlatenheid* (Desolation), written in 1919, a beautiful work, is the heart-rending wail of a God-forgotten despair; it is the wordless but eloquent lament of a man who has lost his heaven on earth.

But with the last elegy the last chord has not been struck. When the inner strength of the stricken man conquered despair, the artist,

too, became serener. Poignant grief made place for resigned but ineffaceable melancholy, and in *Idyllische Naklank* (Idyllic Reminiscence), where the note is once more rustic, we find again all the delightful qualities of the second period—all but the childish gladness, which has been transfigured into smiling earnestness. So Mortelmans remains what he has always been, an optimistic artist.

His very last piano work, *Stemmingsbeeld* (Image of a mood), has been a surprise for his friends; it sounds actually "modern" in the harmony-clashing sense of the word, though without any sophistication; yet it is every inch of it Mortelmans. Does this mean a new period? We shall have to wait and listen. For the moment the composer, who is always sincere, and submissive to his inspiration, is as surprised by the outbreak as his friends.

All Mortelmans's orchestral works, with the exception of his opera and the orchestration of some of his songs and later piano-pieces, belong to his romantic years. Yet they are not songs without words or orchestrated piano-music, as is often the case with other song composers, e.g., Schumann; no, the character of the works is purely symphonic. In the first symphonic poems we cannot but discover some influence of Wagner, but his *Homeric Symphony* in four movements is personal and fine music moulded in a classical form. The orchestration is always well balanced and laid out with taste and distinction, bearing testimony at the same time to a thorough knowledge, as well of the power and the character of the different instruments, as of the result of their mutual co-operation.

Mortelmans has composed an opera, *De Kinderen der Zee* (Children of the sea), to a rather tragic text. It is out of the question to give an analysis here of a work of such magnitude. It is sufficient to say that the opera is equal, in geniality of inspiration and perfection of craftsmanship, to the best of his other works. It was created at Antwerp at the Flemish Opera under rather adverse conditions. Notwithstanding blunders of every kind, the performances were a feast to ear and heart and mind, and the Press was unanimous in hailing *Children of the Sea* as a masterpiece of dramatic music, and the best opera ever written in Belgium.

I must leave many other works untouched: chorals and cantatas, for instance, among which there is not one that ought to be neglected. I have given all the space to those works which are best suited to be introduced in England without delay. In the last few weeks Mortelmans has been transposing for the piano some of the finest old Flemish folk-songs, providing them with simple but adequate accompaniments. His very latest work is a choral composed for a mixed choral society. It is called *Caecilia* and was encored at the first performance. One of our most sceptical critics whom I met after a rehearsal told me spontaneously: "C'est beau à faire pleurer!" And so it is.

At the close of this more or less discursive essay the reader will, perhaps, expect some summing up of Lewis Mortelmans and his art. It is impossible, however, to give final judgments on artists who still possess full creative power. Only history will be able, in a distant future, to judge truly that past which for us is the present. We can only give our opinion, which is more or less partial according to our greater or less infatuation with our topic; and then we say not only how we see and feel things, but also, unconsciously, how we wish that they may be. We try to fetter history in our opinion, and do not observe, in our short-sightedness, how vain that effort is.

Yet our opinions, if they are circumstantially introduced, may be elements for the history of art. My opinion on Mortelmans is easily drawn from the foregoing pages; Mortelmans is a noble and genially gifted composer who has, at the same time, a full command over the almost boundless means of his technique. His aim is not, like that of several modern masters, to do otherwise than others do; he wishes, principally, to transpose his feelings into music, as beautifully and sincerely as possible, without making himself a victim of clever tricks which often freeze into a system. I find Beethoven and Schumann still fresh and strong; theirs is music of the present time and of the future. Much of what modern composers wrote yesterday seems old to me now. Unconsciously Mortelmans links up those two masters, and if I premise that they still belong to our day, I may contend that Mortelmans is a very modern composer. I fervently believe that he is one of the greatest, and that his work, instead of decaying, will grow and strengthen in the future.

LEO VAN RIEL.

ARTISTS AND CONCERT LIFE

As Affected by the War

THERE is no land, no calling, no profession, that has not been seriously shaken both materially and spiritually by the war and what has followed on it, and the life of the touring virtuoso has not been immune.

The career of an artist, which always involved the fight for life and the assertion of his personality, has, further, become in these days almost a martyrdom. It begins with the preparation for the journey. The difficulty of obtaining a passport is always great, sometimes insurmountable. The unlucky wight may have to spend days or weeks in consulates instead of practising or composing. Then there is the uncertainty and the overcrowding of the few express trains that remain on the time table. Often enough he may have to sit in the train feverishly counting the minutes by his watch while the audience is flocking into the hall. The average time between two concert towns used to be from four to six hours; it is now from ten to fifteen, and this costs him half the preceding night because the trains start at seven instead of nine. I used to practise on my journeys, which afforded recreation and rest in the rush from one concert to another; the journey now begins with a race, perhaps a steeplechase, often a hand to hand fight and much elbowing for an empty seat. Passengers are packed like sardines—but without the oil; oil is scarce on the Continent. The journey mostly ends with the loss of one or two belongings—handbag, umbrella, rubber boots, if nothing more valuable.

These emotions are inartistic, and quite unlike those which the public expect from us at night; but, having started on them, I must complete my list. Looking for rest after my journey, instead of during it, I go to the hotel and find nothing but noise. Most of us artists suffer from sleeplessness as a consequence of our perpetual hotel life and the excitements of our calling; but the days of quiet rooms are past. (For years I used to keep a register of them in all European hotels, because I could never take the manager's word as to the "most quiet room in the house.") When I complain of getting no sleep I am met with an excuse which always drives me furious, that it is "only for one night." The year contains for me about 200 such "only-one-nights." I used to be able to bespeak a room; now it is a blessing to get one at all.

Then there is the rate of exchange. The cost of a concert has been multiplied by 2 in London, by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in Paris, by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and so on, while prices of seats, now and pre-war, are in London only as 6 to 5, in Holland as 4 to 3, etc. This lowers the standard of life to successful artists and is an insurmountable barrier to young and rising artists. If Paderewski, who left Warsaw Conservatoire "for lack of sufficient talent," as they said, were to be beginning his career in London to-day, he would have to pay for one concert from 220,000 to 350,000 Polish marks.* I know many countrymen of mine who could earn international laurels if they were not shut up in Poland as in a kind of "Valuta-prison."

I have spoken of material losses, but there are others on the spiritual side of our calling. One of our most treasured joys, one which lightened the burden of a strenuous life, was the feeling of giving pleasure and exhilaration to thousands by the reproduction of masterpieces, lifting them above the small worries of their daily drudgery for at least some happy hours—the feeling that we had contact with them, as it were by an electric current, and could make them feel our own emotions. This implied a certain intellectual and musical education based on some knowledge of the musical art-works, and some judgment acquired by listening to previous interpretations. Excepting a few Mæcenases, the concert public used to be recruited mostly from the educated middle class. Now that Labour has successfully enlarged its earnings the middle class is scarcely in a position even to make both ends meet, and cannot think of treating themselves to the luxury of a concert ticket. So, though the hall is often crowded, the best seats are taken chiefly by the "nouveaux riches" of all sorts and conditions. Their minds are not cultured, and they come only because it is *bon ton* to have been to our concerts, which they swallow without digesting. It is sad to think of Vienna, the Vienna of Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Haydn, Brahms, where after six years of war and famine the audience is quite unmusical, because the musical cannot come.

I am not raising any questions of national or class hatred, merely stating the facts as I see them, and I say that for us artists they are very trying.

I am quite ready to admit that in what has been said I have drawn a picture of Continental rather than of English conditions of life. The rate of exchange stands sufficiently high in this country to have protected society, at any rate to some extent, from basic upheaval, and concert audiences are composed approximately of the same people as before the war. Still, there is one consequence of the war which is

*There are as many Polish marks in a pound sterling as yards in a mile.

felt in England as elsewhere—musical chauvinism. In all European countries during the war chauvinism sprang up. Every European people, great or small, fancies now that it stands at the head and leads the musical world. It asks in each case that the international artist shall perform its own native music, which to him is foreign. Now national music usually means modern music, because in many countries there have been no important composers during the period from Beethoven to Brahms. So we immediately have a dilemma, escape from which is not easy. On the one hand is the ignorant post-war public described above, to whom the standard classical works are a *terra incognita*, and on the other the outcry of the Press for the performance of modern works, the tangled skein of whose themes and harmonies would have been difficult even for an educated audience, before the war, to follow. Even if we assume a thoroughly intellectual audience, the compliance with these demands will entirely miss its mark, as I will now try to prove on æsthetic grounds.

The cry for native music is most insistent in France and England. In England that demand is both intelligible and justified. For in no other country in the world has such a long musical sleep been followed by such an abrupt awakening. Moreover, in consequence of the absence for centuries of any musical achievement worth the name, no artist has more prejudices to overcome than the English composer, at home or abroad. In spite of that, it may be said without exaggeration that young England, with others, stands now in the van of the musical movement. Still, there is no sense in overdoing the propaganda; it only damages all concerned—the interpreter, the public, and most of all the composer. An English newspaper I happened to see was guilty of gross exaggeration when it said that no foreign artist should be tolerated on the concert platform who did not put at least one English composition into his programme. An apt parallel to this foolish demand was the recent appeal of prominent French composers who claimed that any foreign artist should be taxed who did not play in each concert a work by a living Frenchman. Against such a misunderstanding of the attitude and the mission of our art, and of its roots in true feeling and good taste, an emphatic protest must be made; and that in the name, not of internationalism, but of native art itself.

All true art is personal in exact proportion as it is national. The individual artistic personality is the plant, and the nation is the soil in which it grows. Art, we may say, is the symbolical expression of the ideals, the aspirations and the longings of its period and its nation; and the artists, who are the seers and prophets of a nation, crystallize these ideals. More than that, art is the result of the economical and political conditions which prevail of the artist's own social and moral surroundings, and of the customs in which he has been brought up—as Hippolyte Taine ably shows in his inspired *Philosophie de l'art*.

That is true of art in general. For music, when we consider upon what it is nourished, there are two other elements of fundamental importance—the Church and the dance, and these in their turn emanate from national character and temperament.

All these presuppositions differ as each nation differs from every other. And so, too, is the art of each nation different. And each art is, accordingly, different of approach to the performing artist when he is of another nation than the composer's. A Pole, for instance, will as a rule understand a Frenchman better than a German will, an Englishman will be better understood by an American than by an Italian, and so on. Of course, talent, intuition, education, or a long habituation to foreign ways of thinking will overcome many difficulties. But even then the colour is apt to come out in the wash. Think of Chopin played by a German! I have seldom heard it well done. What foreigners consider good interpretation of him is with us Poles, who live in the Chopin-tradition, never safe from damning criticism. Or a Viennese waltz, when an Englishman plays it, or only dances it! Forgive me; I must laugh. Even a Prussian will take his Viennese brother's graceful, vivacious, wistful dance, so full of tears and smiles, and turn it into an insipid, heavy-footed yokel's hop. And anyone who does not understand the waltz misconstrues one of the greatest men of all time—Schubert, whose music is mainly built on Viennese tunes.

The few instances I have given will go some way to show what is meant by the artist's nationality, but they do not by any means exhaust the presuppositions which have to be taken into account. There is the composer's own personality, his mental outlook, his habits and conditions of life—all these have to be known and weighed before one can hope to interpret properly even a single work of his. And in this connexion I will, if you will allow me, quote a striking example from my own experience.

During the war I happened to come across a Suite for Violin and Orchestra by Serge Tanieev. As I read the score I became so enthusiastic that I decided to put the work in study. I venture to assert that it is the finest work composed for the fiddle since Brahms's Concerto, equally lofty in thematic invention, counterpoint, harmony and orchestration. Some of the movements, in particular the "Variations" and the "Sage," are programme music, but in the best sense of the word; they attempt not to illustrate concrete events—an attempt which never amounts, in my opinion, to much more than a cheap, rough-and-ready onomatopoeia—but to reflect the moods which take possession of the soul when those events happen.

When I had learnt the work I invited some friends to hear it. To make the understanding of it easier I gave a short lecture before I played, putting before my hearers the themes and their counterpoint

and the purport of the "programme." This programme I did not get from the composer; it was rather a vision that I saw in the music itself. I saw the snow-covered Russian steppes, the *troika* jingling on its way surrounded by wolves, and many other pictures from Russian folk-tales; but all this not directly as pictures, but in an epic sense, as related by that peculiarly Russian type, the Niania, or nurse, who often brings up three generations of a family, and one of whose most sacred traditions it is to sing children to sleep with blood-curdling stories. These visions were called up in me by the music. Now comes the curious thing. Among those invited was the well-known pianist Wanda Landowska, but she had been unable to be present. I met her a few days later and told her I had played some Tanieev. She was wild with regret at not having been present, because she knew Tanieev personally, and I, delighted to learn at last something of a man whom I admired so much as a composer, asked for her impressions. Among many things she told me this. Tanieev, she said, was a very modest and retiring man, often unapproachable to strangers. He lived with his Niania; 80 years old she was, and he loved her more than anyone. The merry-thought in the chicken, the slice of cake with citron in it, the armchair with the right slope in it, all belonged to Niania. Whoever wanted to win a way to his heart always found that he had to change at a junction called "Niania." I could scarcely believe my ears as I heard this description of a man whose music suited it so wonderfully. Now, I am by birth a Russian Pole, and have, moreover, for years past given concerts in various provinces of Russia, and know their folk tunes pretty well, and so I can grasp in its essence and reproduce, if I may say so, the emotional content of any Russian work. But how could one expect that of, for instance, an Englishman? Little as he might expect it, an Englishman who happened to be on a concert tour in Petrograd would come up against and be nonplussed by this chauvinistic attitude, just as a Russian would in London.

There are many composers who reveal themselves to an interpreter only when he is familiar with the whole of their work. Anyone who is really a master of his craft has his own style, an authoritative knowledge of which can be acquired only by penetrating deeply and intimately into their compositions. I am thinking, for instance, of Brahms' frequent cross rhythms whose existence is apt to escape notice by the variety of his notations. If anyone who does not know his Brahms were suddenly to attack the G major Sonata, it is a hundred to one he would take the bars

The image contains three systems of musical notation. The first system is a piano introduction, marked with a 'p' (piano) dynamic. It features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a supporting line. The second system shows a more complex passage with many beamed notes, likely sixteenth or thirty-second notes, in both staves. The third system continues this passage, ending with 'etc.' in both staves.

Although the time is six-four, the pianist must play this passage from the eleventh bar onwards, accenting the first, fourth, seventh and tenth quavers—in fact, as it is written in the Trio, in triplets.

as intended to be in the same rhythm for both instruments, and play the fiddle part in syncopation and feel the quavers in the piano part as sextolets instead of triplets. It is only when we know Brahms better—for instance, the Coda of the B major Trio, where the cross rhythmic notes are left to their own devices (*i.e.*, held on longer)—

This is incidentally an example of a written-out *ritardando*. A rhythmical figure—here sextoletts—changes as it goes on into notes of greater value, so that the listener, who does not see the alteration of the time values, receives automatically the impression of a *ritardando*. In such cases one must be careful not to introduce also the ordinary *ritardando*, and so make the music drag twice over.

that we find one of the charms of such passages to be just this, that two simultaneous rhythms are apparently independent of one another, and yet that one, or both, of them appear to be, or rather to sound as if they were, in another than the original rhythm. Or that very individual mood, contemplative and tinged with sadness—like the atmosphere of a Tschechhoff, or an interior by Pieter de Hoog—which we find in Brahms's Scherzos, in the D minor Violin Sonata, perhaps, or the B flat major Piano Concerto, or the quartets—who can divine this mood without knowing his collected works and their tradition? Or, again, the piling up of expression marks in Reger—would they not mislead rather than guide anyone who did not know that Reger never meant them to be taken too seriously, and that he put them there only from a kind of physical terror of being played in a wooden way.

If we try to draw conclusions from these remarks, from which hardly anyone who has given thought to æsthetic principles will be inclined to differ, we reach two alternatives. Either a man abandons, for good and all, his interpretation of the classics and of such moderns as his chance "presuppositions" have drawn him towards, settles for years together in all the musically chauvinistic countries (at the same time!), stops the gaps in his training with as much of their individual views of life as he can absorb, and so fits himself to form an opinion on the musical novelties of all European peoples—and among a thousand empty shells he will perhaps find one pearl—and then, well advanced in years, he begins his second concert career. Or he throws all psychology to the winds, picks up the first decent piece of music he comes across in the countries which have the loudest propaganda, and stops their mouths with it. I intend by this, of course, only a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole business. The first alternative is impracticable; and the second, instead of stopping these noisy mouths, would open them wider, for then at last they would have a perfect right to complain of poor interpretation. There have been heaps of cases in Paris and London of great artists who have been foolish enough to perform modern works belonging to people whose way of thinking was unfamiliar to them and who have been, rightly, torn in pieces by the critics. There is only one solution. Mankind must gradually be brought back to a reasonable frame of mind. People must be reminded that it is not so long ago that German conductors and singers were had over for Wagner operas and a whole season arranged for Italian opera, and that pilgrimage was made to Germany and Austria to study Brahms, and so on. And yet, the tradition of Wagner, Brahms, or Verdi is older and more cosmopolitan than that of the d'Indys, Ravels, Elgars, Ireland, Respighis and others! And the concert repertory of Sonatas, Concertos, etc., is not a sort of wardrobe that can be replenished or renewed by a woman in the Rue de la Paix, or a man in Conduit Street, in accordance with the demand of fashion and the supply of money.

As I have admitted earlier, the propaganda for modern music is entirely justified, but it has got hold of the wrong end of the stick. You natives of England, France, Italy, you Europeans, and of course, too, Americans! don't require of foreigners that they should play your own music to you. Rather place the best of your own artists, by every method of propaganda, and, if need be, by direct subsidy, in a position to give authoritative professional interpretations of your composers' work, with a view to spreading abroad the fame of your native art. Theirs is the vocation to act as interpreters of your composers; it is in them that all the threads meet—of heredity and education and, possibly, personal acquaintance with the composer—to form an ideal presentation of native works of art. Once the knowledge of this modern musical literature has been spread abroad by its most suitable interpreters, there will spring up, for the works of those masters who merit it, that tradition of the conception, the tempi, and so on, which will enable the foreigner to attack the works without fear of gross misunderstanding, just as it has always sprung up with the great masters of the past. The most you can require of the foreign artist—if you do require, instead of leaving to him a matter in which he believes himself to be the best judge—is that he should familiarize you with the works of his own land, or his school, or his adopted country, of people whose motives he understands and whose way of life is second nature to him, whose feeling he will then divine and be able to re-create in that symbol which we call a work of art.

Why must we go on for ever talking only of commercial reciprocity? We need quite as much that spiritual reciprocity which shall restore the spiritual equilibrium of Europe.

If I have taken my courage in both hands and told what must be, for many, unpleasant truths, I have done so because on the one hand I thought I might presume—I say it in all modesty—to speak with authority on this particular point, and because, on the other, I felt myself to be above any suspicion of speaking *pro domo*. For I am enabled by birth, by education, by the lines in which my life has been cast and by the scope of my qualifications, to do the opposite of all that I am contending for, on behalf of my brother artists, as being of right their own.

BRONISLAW HUBERMAN.

Trans., A. H. F. S.

VIOLONCELLO PLAYING

SINCE I wrote on the violoncello for MUSIC AND LETTERS (Vol. I., No. 2) I have been asked from several quarters to say something more about it, and in particular about the tone quality.

A big technique on the violoncello without a good tone is not pleasant. A good tone doesn't depend only on the maker of an instrument, and it is a fact that the finer an instrument is the more does it seem to require a great player. Many amateurs have the luck to be the owners of the finest instruments, yet when they draw the bow across the strings one could think that they are playing on what might be called a factory-made instrument. I suppose the same applies in many things—the better the object the finer the treatment it requires. Dress a clumsy country girl in a smart frock and both the girl and the frock look grotesque, while the same girl in a suitable land costume might look quite attractive.

The world is unanimous in declaring that the violoncello is the most glorious instrument the gods ever made, yet how few violoncellists have made it worthy of its godliness!

To many of the past generation of violoncellists we owe much good, but also a great deal of harm. There has been for the last fifteen years such a big step forward in the school of playing the violoncello that I believe that, if it were possible to hear those great virtuosi of the past generation we would be surprised to find that we no longer could enjoy their playing as our predecessors did. The violoncello was still young then and only in a transitional state. I still remember in my young days that it was impossible for a violoncellist to obtain the same fees as a violinist or a pianist, even that, in some great towns in Germany, the violoncello as a solo instrument was positively disliked; and how a particular lady violoncellist was accepted to play in Munich only on account of her looks. That the violoncello was not a popular solo instrument can also be proved from its repertoire. In my article last April, I endeavoured to show how few really fine solo works have been written for this instrument; and it is my belief that this is owing to the fact that composers in the past have been afraid of the problem of writing for the violoncello as a solo instrument, because it had not been developed as a means of interpreting real music. A certain number of great works have existed for many years; but they could

never have received performances which did justice to them, since they have one after another slipped back into oblivion. The study of the violoncello—there can be no question about this—has been approached from a wrong point of view, and we are still to-day suffering from the results. Probably the technique was developed to the sacrifice of the tone, or *vice versa*; and if some combined good tone and big technique the musical side was then lacking. There are still before the public two classes of imperfect players. The virtuoso without musicality and the good musician without technique. Personally I think the latter is the less harmful of the two; because such a player can at least choose the works to suit his technical limitations, while the mere virtuoso will disrespectfully tackle every masterpiece, without the slightest reverence for the musical ideas of the composer, and thus destroy the essence of the works.

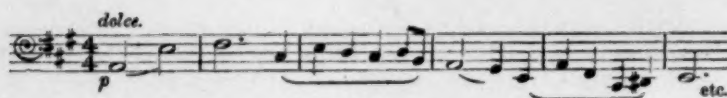
The day has arrived when it is realised that the study of technique and tone are one with the study of music. Everything should be prepared with the ideal in front of one of being able to interpret a work with its true meaning, and not in any way to force it into showing off tone or technique or vibrato.

The study of vibrato is a very important element in the art of interpretation. I should like to say something as to the different uses of this particular branch of technique. Just as melodies vary, just as the speeds of movements vary, so do the means by which we express them vary, and one of the most subtle means of giving the exact interpretation to a melody is not only the knowledge of when to make vibrato, and whether it should be quick or slow, but also on the intuitive knowledge of whether the mood of a tune requires any vibrato at all. Perhaps I can make myself a little clearer if I quote a few examples from works which every violoncellist must know. Suppose we take the opening of the variations by Böellmann Ex. 1., and play this theme as we feel it, we should use a quick and close vibrato. Now take at once the opening subject of the Sonata in A of Beethoven Ex. 2. Here we require practically no vibrato at all. These are two extreme cases which are easy to follow; but if we take the opening of the Schumann Concerto in A Minor Ex. 3, the vibrato then becomes broader and slower, since it is to express a melody full of feeling. Now if a violoncellist will take these examples and play them with only one kind of vibrato, he will very soon realise how mad and almost ridiculous some of them would sound; and it is a curious fact that just as in a picture, if one detail is out of drawing, the whole composition is spoiled, so in the interpretation of a piece of music, if any point is played ignorantly, even if only so far as vibrato is concerned, the perspective of the work is upset. Vibrato in itself is perhaps the most trifling of all means of interpretation, but the abuse of vibrato can completely wreck any performance.

Ex. 1.



Ex. 2.



Ex. 3.



It is necessary, vital, in fact, to know the difference between a good vibrato and a bad one. It doesn't depend only on the speed, but on its quality, which together with the pressure of the bow gives colour to the tone. It isn't sufficient to shake the hand and elbow up and down or twist the fingers sideways on the finger-board. A too rapid motion of the hand will produce a vibrato which becomes a mere nervous shaky note. The slow wobble of the hand is also bad, for it creates a monotonous heavy buzz and upsets the intonation, making a note sound more like three quarters of a tone.

The vibrato is almost impossible to explain in words and perhaps the most difficult thing to teach. It is mainly a question of ear, like intonation, and if a student hasn't got a sensitive ear he can hardly ever get a really good vibrato, nor a true intonation; and to build up a technique on these wrong bases is useless. One of the very simplest ways of curing the defects arising from these technical blemishes is to train the mind to listen to what one is doing. It has often occurred to me that many people play without having learned to listen to what they are playing. I am certain that many students do what they are told to do and often practise conscientiously without listening to the result of their work; and hard practice without the faculty for listening

or for self criticism is injurious. There are others also who have a great facility for playing without practice, but there is rarely any depth or real worth in their performance, the results being always superficial and unfinished. This means that they have spent no time in research work on their instrument and have given very little thought to it, because what they do, so far as it goes, has come naturally and without any effort. It is impossible for such a performer to become a useful teacher, because, in order to teach, one must know exactly how a thing is done—only those who have had the greatest struggle to become good players will make the finest teachers. There is no short road to the making of a great artist. It can only be attained by great patience, real hard work and love for the instrument through which the artist speaks to the world.

For a performance to be really perfect no one quality should be outstanding, but every technical equipment should take its place naturally—each in the exact proportion necessary for the presentation of a work. In this way only can a performer hope to reach that point of concentration which exactly balances all the forces that combine technical equipment and musical interpretation, so that the beauty of the work itself shall stand out as the first thing noticeable in a performance.

The violoncello may be said to be the most difficult instrument to accompany. There are very few indeed who are able to accompany both singers and instrumentalists perfectly. As a rule an accompanist who is good for singers is bad for instrumentalists. The task of an accompanist is certainly not an easy one. It is true that he has less responsibility in public and need not go through the terrible agonies that soloists have. To begin with he must completely sink his personality and individuality in that of the soloist; his nature must blend easily with the other's; there must be on his side sympathy, unselfishness and subservience without self-effacement. It is essential that an accompanist should be able to interpret a work in the same way as the soloist, and the great accompanist is one who can foresee what the soloist is going to do, who can not only follow the solo part, but also support it while following. As a player he must have the technique of a soloist, though not, perhaps, brought up to the same perfect pitch, and also a clear knowledge of the quality of tone required either when playing the *tutti* or accompanying the soloist.

The singer requires from the accompanist more support, and because of the words and breathing it is easier for the pianist to follow. Also there is more need for the use of the pedal to sustain the chords and harmonies which help the singer; while with a stringed instrument, especially the violoncello, the pedal must be very carefully handled, and the soft pedal is more often required.

The position of an accompanist in the artistic world is quite as important as that of a soloist or chamber music player; he holds in his hands the power either to make or mar a whole concert, and though

his place in the list of artists is always a very humble one the actual requirements expected from him are very great indeed.

Very frequently pianists become accompanists because they have failed as soloists; others accompany while waiting for an opportunity to become soloists, and only a few take to accompanying because they feel it is their *métier*. In France there is a greater number of good accompanists than in England, because, once they learn the piano technique, they take lessons with soloists, both string players and singers, and it is natural that accompanists should be able to get even more help from soloists than from their own piano teachers. It is an interesting point to note here, that the best accompanists for a stringed instrument are almost always string players themselves. They seem to have the intuition as to what strength of tone is required at any given moment, as well as the power to move sympathetically with the soloist.

The art of accompanying should be studied just as carefully as any other branch of music, for the accompanist is indispensable to the soloist, and his share in the performance of a work is just as vital as that of the one he is accompanying, in order to make the result a complete work of art, and artistically a great accompanist may be quite as high an artist as the greatest soloists in the world; the only difference in their actual material position is an unfortunate one—it is a commercial difference.

GUILHERMINA SUGGIA.

NEGLECTED TREASURES IN HANDEL'S OPERAS

THOSE of us who still take an interest in Handel know that he did not write oratorios in his youth, but that of his best-known works on a large scale *Israel in Egypt* was not produced until he was well over fifty, and the *Messiah* and *Samson* three years later. It seems odd that so little curiosity should be shown about what he did in the previous thirty years. Is Handel, like early nineteenth century silver, only second-hand and not yet antique? *Acis*, *Alexander's Feast* and one or two anthems are nearly the only works of his youth that even our fathers knew much about, and to-day we have almost forgotten them. They are certainly not unworthy of what followed. Yet one or two numbers out of each are all that the average musician knows, and they represented only one side, and that a small one, of his output during a quarter of a century. The bulk of that work consisted of secular operas, produced at the average rate of nearly two a year, and all without exception virtually unknown to-day.

There are of course reasons for this. A great part of Handel's dominion over us in the past has depended on the overwhelming strength of his writing for massed voices. He reached the climax of his power in this department in the *Israel*, after which he wrote no more operas, and the operas themselves contain practically no choruses except a single short dance movement at the end of the last act which is always of the baldest description, and gives no scope for a modern choir. It is mainly through their choruses that one or two earlier works have survived.

Again, the operas were all set to Italian libretti of the slenderest merit, and written for the exhibition of foreign star singers to a fashionable audience, and so never reached the general public. They were mostly tossed off at express speed in rapid succession to satisfy customers who merely wanted virtuosity. Each one was elbowed out by its successors and there are few instances of any one of them being repeated after its first run was over. Moreover, there were no cheap "people's editions," and only four of the forty-two were printed in full in Handel's life-time, and these in score only. The result was that they were dead almost as soon as born and were never dug up until the middle of the nineteenth century when Dr. Chrysander began his great edition for the German Handel Society, and even he, while adding a pianoforte accompaniment throughout to the oratorios, printed the opera scores as they stood. There have been very few attempts to

publish individual songs. There are two old volumes entitled "Apollo's Feast—a Well Chosen Collection of the Favourite and Most Celebrated Songs out of the Latest Operas Composed by Mr. Handel," printed by Walsh. They bear no date, but must have been published about 1730, as the latest opera drawn upon was *Tolomeo*, produced in 1728. They are in score, in many cases imperfect, inner parts for the strings are sometimes omitted, and they contain a fair proportion of misprints and inaccuracies; but they are of considerable value, and include nearly two hundred songs, good, bad and indifferent. I only met these by accident, a second-hand music seller showing them to me as containing some interesting autographs—one volume had on the flyleaf the name of Charles Wesley, and the other "C. W., the kind gift of Mr. Jonathan Battishill, of St. Paul's Cathedral, an eminent composer." They are now among my most valued possessions. Beyond these there are the few songs included in the well-known "Gemme d'antichità" and "Monday popular" series, and Mr. Best edited a set of forty-three for Messrs. Boosey. During the last few years Dr. Ernest Walker has brought out a small volume of ten soprano songs, and one or two of the quieter solos, such as "Dove sei" (*Rodelinda*) and "Rendi il sereno" (*Sosarme*) have been squeezed into sacred words, and used to be sung for years in our cathedrals as anthems. One of my volumes of "Apollo's Feast" even has a marginal note in an unknown hand against three songs to the effect that Dr. Arnold had adapted these in his oratorio *The Redemption*. If Handel cribbed other people's work he was paid in the same coin, though the amiable pedants who followed his example could hardly plead like him that success justified the means. At any rate of Arnold's *Redemption*, "it is very, very certain that it's very, very dead"—even deader than its French namesake of a century later. If I add that there is an edition by R. Franz, published in Germany but hardly known here, consisting of a few selected songs with piano arrangement, I have probably exhausted all the materials available for the average singer, while the Best and Walker volumes alone are easily accessible to-day.

Well, after all, does it much matter? It may be urged that the life Handel led as the hard-worked business manager of the London opera house must have left him very little time, and still less mental energy, to produce anything really vital, and the collections mentioned must surely have picked out most of the plums from the cake.

Now it is perfectly true that almost every opera contains a good deal of stuff which was turned out by the yard. Dr. Walker has used some pretty plain language about this fatal facility in his *History of Music* in England, and it is not a whit too strong. But at the same time, as he freely grants, it would be a great mistake to shut up a volume of Chrysander in disgust because the reader has waded through twenty pages of score and found nothing to reward him. Something—perhaps

some dramatic situation here or there—catches the composer's fancy, or possibly he had had a better night than usual and was feeling pretty fresh, and in the midst of the desert we find blossoming a really wonderful flower. Some operas have a succession of songs, every one a masterpiece, which the singers of to-day surely might have found out. And yet, is it so wonderful? No doubt our present singers are far better musicians than those of past generations. The music they have to sing is so much more complicated and chromatic that they have to be, if they are to learn the notes at all. Compare, for instance, the most florid songs of Rossini or Verdi with such music as the solo in "Sea-drift." The former are mainly a question of vocal technique; the latter—well I suppose it is possible to learn it by heart, but I have heard it sung more than once in public with the score before me, and each time came away with the impression that the soloist had been laboriously counting the number of semitones between each note and the next, and now and then counting them wrong. Be that as it may—and I am not belittling Delius' work—the latter-day singer's difficulties are totally different from the problems of another age, and very few are those who really conquer a form of virtuosity which they may never be called on to exercise. We elders, who remember Tietjens, Trebelli and Santley in their prime, know what the present generation misses. Are there no all-round artists who can master both styles? No doubt Trebelli, if she were alive to-day and in possession of her full powers, would be equal to anything, for apart from her impeccable technique she was a splendid musician. To most of us, however, even a festival performance of the *Messiah* is spoilt by the doubtful success which the soloists make of their divisions, and the perpetual wobble with which most of them ruin their cantilena. The *Messiah* really will not stand this sort of thing, nor for that matter will *Don Giovanni*, the *Zauberflöte* or *Fidelio*. The musical critics are either singularly charitable or else have given it up as a bad job, and say in print very different things from what some of us utter in private. It really should be possible without the aid of the orchestral context or a previous knowledge of the work to be reasonably certain whether the artist means to be on C sharp or C natural.

Now Handel had under him a cast whose vocalisation must have been superb. All contemporary accounts agree on this and the internal evidence of the scores abundantly confirms it. We know the lines on which Porpora and the other great teachers worked. The human voice was expected to do within the limits of its compass whatever could be done (short of double stopping) by a violin. Of course rapid execution was only one side of the art, and the critics were equally exacting in their judgments on the performance of slow and pathetic movements. There are plenty of these in every opera, and they demand the most perfect breath control and a production of long notes or phrases free from the slightest suspicion of a wobble. There is, for instance, a

magnificent song in *Flavio*, "Rompo i lacci," in which the singer declares his intention of breaking away from the fetters of his love, yet asks heaven how he can ever live apart from the lady. The first section is a furious Allegro with streams of semiquavers for both voice and strings; the second, one of those glorious slow triple time movements of which Handel seems to have had the monopoly. It may be compared by way of contrast with a better-known song, "Piangerò," in *Giulio Cesare*, to be found in Best's volume. In this the two halves come in reverse order, a strikingly beautiful lament with a fiery second part, where Cleopatra threatens to make her persecutor's life a burden by haunting him after her death.

Now we all try to sing Bach, and yet his passages are quite as florid as Handel's, and, unlike him, they consistently ignore the convenience of the singer. Some wit said that Brahms's music is better than it sounds. With Handel it is often emphatically the reverse. He sounds better than he looks. Time after time I have found that a song which seems commonplace in cold print is extraordinarily effective in actual performance. Though it may contain all the usual tags, yet his unfailing rhythmical energy will carry one off one's feet, and in this respect the difference between him and his operatic contemporaries is amazing. His vigour makes one ignore the workmanship and simply revel in the swing of the piece. Not that the workmanship is wanting. His mastery of his materials was complete, and he is never in a difficulty. The sympathy which he shows with the Italian ideals after going through the mill of a thorough German training results in work which is unimpeachable on the academic side, and at the same time gives the singer every chance of showing off both technique and temperament. The voice is always the principal part, and when the singer is doing anything especially brilliant it is seldom that any orchestral dogs bark. Here his interests and his inclinations worked together. He had no notion of weaving a web for his own satisfaction only, and tackling ever new musical problems like Bach. He was the servant of his public, and meant to give them the best of its kind, no doubt, but still the style they wanted. Now if this were all we might well remain satisfied with the few specimens which have survived. It is not all—not by a long way. In considering the songs at present accessible, I often wonder why some were taken and others left. It is a matter of taste, no doubt, and it is not to be expected that any two people would choose the same specimens. It is amusing to find authorities like Messrs. Fuller Maitland and Streatfeild and Dr. Walker applying such different epithets to the same work and the same songs. But they all agree that the best is very good indeed, and that there is quite enough of the best to be worth seeking. I think, too, they would also admit that there is plenty of material still unpublished (except in the German series) to make several more collections quite as good as any of those I have mentioned. Handel's versatility strikes us

more and more as we know him better. He would so often remain for a time absolutely conventional, and then suddenly break out in some wholly unexpected fashion. To take an instance, the usual plan of song was a principal part in which the tonality is very definitely preserved, and a second part up to the *Da capo* in which there is some freedom of modulation. As a rule the middle section follows a pattern, and the sequence of keys is fairly constant, and within rather narrow limits—relative minor or major as the case may be, mediant minor, and so on; and in the case of the twelve-eight *Siciliano* songs of which he was so fond, a rather monotonous playing with Neapolitan sixths. But there is a song in *Scipio* (1726), "Come onda incalza altr'ondra," in the key of C minor, with a melody of haunting beauty throughout, in which the second part ends as follows:—

len - ti, len - ti, len - ti di do - lo-re in do-lor, di do-lo-re in do-lor e a

mor - - - te van - no di do-lor . . in do-

- lor a mor - - te van - - no

Ac.

Here we are whisked within a few bars from G minor to B flat minor, A flat minor and back again to G minor, a sequence which must have been a rude shock to an eighteenth century audience, and would have been regarded as abrupt a century later. (I may say here that in this article I avoid calling attention to any song which so far as I know is published with piano accompaniment in any form accessible to-day to the ordinary student.) It is interesting to compare "Come onda" with "Empio fato" (*Rodrigo*, 1707). That was the earliest of Handel's productions during his stay in Italy, and the song is one of restless modulation throughout. The opening phrase is identical (though in much slower rhythm) with "O quam tristis" from Astorga's *Stabat Mater*, but after the first two bars all resemblance ceases. The modulation is striking but comparatively experimental. He had not yet absorbed the Italian gift of smoothness and moves with less certain steps than in his works of a few years later; nevertheless, it is full of beauty and an interesting example of his transitional period, while the second section which I quote is worthy of his best days.

Pre-daan-cor-di cru - da mor-te spir-to nu-do om-bra va-gan-te sempre in

3 Violins.
Viola.
Bass.

tor-no al tuo sem-bian-te tut-ta fè mi vol-ge - rò tut-ta

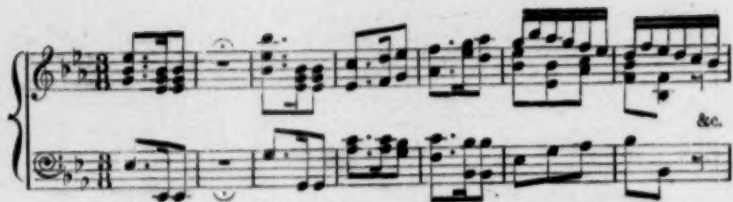
fe . . . mi . . . vol - ge - rò . . . spir - to nu - doo m br a -

gan - te sem pre in - tor - no al tuo sem - bian - te tut - ta fe mi vol - ge -

- rò tut - ta fe mi vol - ge - rò.

Coming to the operas written in England, *Teseo* has been quoted by all writers as containing a large proportion of fine music, and they unite in picking out "Vieni torna" (in Dr. Walker's volume) as the gem of the whole. There is also a splendid part for Medea in which the strings of the orchestra are treated to some passage writing of unusual freedom. This is one of the few works which was published *in extenso* before Chrysander's time.

But I give the palm to *Radamisto* (1720), in which, from whatever cause, we find signs of care and self-criticism which are deplorably absent in many others, and the instrumentation is exceptionally full. There is a declamatory song "Perfido" for contralto, the opening of which is curiously like the theme of the Scherzo to the Choral Symphony.



Senesino, who joined Handel's Company after the first run of the opera and took the part when the work was revived a few months later, must have been electrifying in this. It contains other songs of equal merit. "Son contenta di morire" is a movement of extraordinary power. It is on one of Handel's most vigorous moving basses in an endless stream of quavers and contains, in particular, one diminished 7th (a chord which he never cheapened by overwork) which makes the listener simply shiver. The tenor has a slashing song, "Ferite uccidete," which requires the robustest of voices and equal powers of breath and flexibility. A singer who has worked "Sound an alarm" till he is sick of it would find this a revelation. For soprano I would specially mention two songs, one—"Vanne Sorella ingrata" scored for strings, the counterpoint of which is very much like the piano solo movement in Bach's G Major Sonata for Violin and Cembalo. The other song, "La sorte, il ciel, amor," is to my mind one of the very finest of Handel's airs. The main phrase is in the same key and rhythm, and almost the same notes as the opening of "With verdure clad." It makes even greater demands on the singer's vocalization than that great song. But there are so many fine things in the work that one can pick almost at random. Any student should have a long look at the quartette which was added in the second version. It is a splendid thing, though, as the hero is a contralto and the two women both soprani, it is not suitable for the ordinary S. A. T. B. quartette.

This suggests a word as to the difficulty of reproducing any of the operas to-day. The first obvious trouble is that the libretti and plots as a rule are mere rubbish, and a modern audience would certainly kick at the endless *Da capo* form. This might be met by ignoring the repeat and ending most of the songs with the opening symphony. But the hero's parts in Handel's time were most written for Senesino and other artificial male soprani or contralti, and in consequence the modern cast would be mostly women. In view of Ravogli's success in *Orfeo* during our time this might not be any great drawback. Von Bülow would probably have counted it to Handel for righteousness that there are comparatively few parts for tenors. *Ottone* and *Flavio* (1723) are not on the same level as *Radamisto*, but the former was the

occasion for Cuzzoni's first appearance, and "Falsa immagine," the song in which she scored her great triumph after swearing she wouldn't sing it at all, is one of Handel's most lovely airs, and nobody who knows it will be surprised at the success which it gained. It is, however, no song for an imperfectly equipped performer. There is also a gloriously beautiful aria, "Vieni o figlio," for a rather high contralto, with a throbbing figure for the strings very similar to that in the last part of "I know that my Redeemer liveth" and quite as beautiful.



Flavio has "Rompo i lacci," already mentioned, which is enough by itself to redeem the opera, and a splendid pathetic soprano song, "Parto sì." The latter contains at the end an audacious Rosalia with a cumulative crescendo, and might have been written for Albani as she was 40 years ago. 1724 was the year of *Giulio Cesare*. One or two of the numbers are not unknown, but nearly the whole work deserves immortality. *Cæsar* himself has some splendid recitatives as well as arias, specially "Dall' ondosso periglio," where the two styles alternate in a manner of which Rossi's "Gelosia" may be said to be the germ. "All lampo dell' armi" is another, a war song requiring clear, rapid

articulation as well as the usual coloratura. Cleopatra's part is equally rich and includes the gem "Se pietà di me non senti," a song of the deepest pathos with a second part almost finer than the first, fully scored, with an independent bassoon part. "Dormerò la tua fierezza" is in different style, ugly, rough and angular, in perfect correspondence with the part of the bullying tyrant. "Va tacito e nascosto," scored for strings and two horns, has a curious creeping effect, again carrying out exactly the idea of the words. But really, almost everything in this work repays study. The following year was that of *Rodelinda*, another of Handel's best operas. "Dove sei" and "Con rauco mormorio" are comparatively familiar, but there are others as good. "Se'l mio duol non è sì forte" is a soprano song of moving tragedy, quite worth placing beside some of the Passion music in the *Messiah*, while "Se fiera belua ha cinto" is to my mind unique among all Handel's songs as a rollicking piece of sheer high spirits. The words are about nothing in particular, and feeling in an irresponsible mood he fairly "let himself rip."

If I were challenged to choose definitely any single song as the best of all, I think I should settle on "Di notte il pellegrino," an air for soprano from *Riccardo* (1727). In the first part the traveller is represented wandering out of his path in the dark—in the second he sees a light and plucks up his courage. The opening notes are the same as those of "The people that walked," written 14 years later, but the idea of groping is represented differently, the voice and the bass both crawling about in a most sinuous fashion and suggesting Bach's methods quite as much as Handel's. The second part is different, a second violin part being written out fully to help out an accompaniment which moves in plain diatonic harmony. But I must warn any half-trained soprano against tackling this song except in private for study. *Admeto*, produced the same year, is remarkable for a high average level, rather than for anything really exceptional. There is, however, a powerful declamatory song, "Sparite pensieri," for contralto, and "Vedrò fra poco," a fine swinging air for soprano, less florid and easier to sing than most.

Tolomeo (1728) contains one of Handel's very finest slow triple time airs, "Torna sol" with a gliding accompaniment of strings in four parts moving mostly in semiquavers. I know nothing else of his or anyone else's quite like this song. There is also a short *Siciliano* movement for contralto, "Tiranni miei pensieri," of great beauty, which includes the phrase afterwards adopted for "How beautiful are the feet," and ends up with a few sighs for the voice as the singer falls asleep, leaving the band to finish the melody. As a matter of detail, the figures to the bass and the parts in the score as it stands in the third bar of the extract, are inconsistent, the three 7ths not being brought out. They were supplied no doubt by the harpsichord.

Da te mi di ri-po - so un sol mo-men - to un

Larghetto.

7 6 6 5 6 6 5

sol un sol mo-men - to

pp

7 7 4 2

6 6 7 7 6 4 5

Esio (1732), besides "Nasce al bosco" and the other bass song, so well known as "Droop not, young lover," has a lament for soprano, "Ah non son io," requiring a compass of close on two octaves from B natural up to A; but those who can command this will find it a treasure. It is all built on one short phrase which is treated with extraordinary skill and variety.

Ariadne (1733) contains another lament with a passage which haunted me for days after I first found it.

vìa... sfo-gian-do il suo do-lor

Andante.

tr

tr &c.

Atalanta and *Arminio* were both produced in 1736. In the former there is a baritone air, "Impara ingrata," in which a singer with a free production would simply revel. The rhythm is irresistible, and one can hardly imagine a German producing anything quite so joyous and impudent. In fact, the nearest I can think of is Carmen's "Presso al bastion." *Arminio* contains one air at least of Handel's best, "Vado a morir" for contralto. Apart from its general level of beauty, it has a prolonged chord of the diminished 7th laid out in exactly the same way as he did later in "He was despised."

- scio la pa-ce vi las-cio la pa-ce la

Larghetto e piano.

pa - ce ch' ho nel cor, va - do a mo rir vi las - cio la

pa - - ci ch' ho . . nel cor, ch' ho nel cor &c.

I have only mentioned a few of the operas, and I am not implying for a moment that those I have omitted are of no interest. Any student wanting to pick out twenty or thirty unprinted airs might well make a list absolutely different from mine. I should be more than satisfied if any one should be attracted by my article to dig further in this mine and should bring to the surface things which I have missed. One thing is certain. It is hard to realise the irresistible swing of much of this music from merely looking at the printed page. It comes out in performance to an extent which will astonish many quite good readers.

The arrangement of these songs for piano accompaniment is another matter in which tastes will differ. It is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rule. When they are scored for full string quartet it is simple, but it so often happens that there is nothing but a bass more or less fully figured, and either nothing else or a single violin part, and that often full of gaps. We are always told that Handel himself filled up the inner parts in performance on the harpsichord. These were, of course, not written down, and he probably never played them twice alike. There is therefore a fair field open for conjecture, and the only way for a student to learn his methods is to transcribe in the first instance as many as possible of the songs where the score is

fullest. Even after doing this there is much guesswork. Nobody can say for certain that so skilled a contrapuntist confined himself throughout these songs to dull, plain harmony, but it is a great temptation to over-elaborate and to copy Bach rather than Handel. We can only be judged by results. This applies specially to the unison songs such as "Droop not," where there is no harmony whatever, except in the symphonies, and the only accompaniment consists of strings in unison and octaves with the voice. Here editors have harmonised freely, and it was the only thing to do.

C. FAIRFAX CROWDER.

A NOTE ON PURCELL'S MUSIC

CLOSE upon a hundred years after Purcell was buried in Westminster Abbey Dr. Burney was still able to write of him that he "is as much the pride of an Englishman in Music, as Shakspeare in productions for the stage." But, he continues, "unluckily for Purcell! he built his fame with such perishable materials that his worth and works are daily diminishing—and so much is our great musician's celebrity already consigned to tradition that it will soon be as difficult to find his songs, or at least to hear them, as those of his predecessors, Orpheus and Amphion."

There is no denying that after the lapse of another century and a quarter Burney's dismal prophecy has been pretty accurately fulfilled. For the great mass of the English public, and, one may say, for our musicians too, Purcell at the present day is a name and nothing more.

It is true that from time to time there are sporadic attempts on the part of a few enthusiasts to resuscitate his music, and at the present time there are signs of quite a vigorous effort to revive some of his less-known songs and smaller pieces. This seems to be part of a general movement. Our music-lovers have discovered that we really can boast some Old Masters, and seem inclined to take refuge among the ancients if they find that they are not prepared to go the whole way with the moderns.* While to the Cambridge production of the *Fairy Queen* must be given the credit of creating a genuine interest in Purcell's stage music, showing, as it did, that a Purcell opera is not a grave-full of dead bones, of no use to anybody but an archaeologist, but something very much alive and vivacious enough to please undergraduates and antiquaries alike.

Still, when all is said and done, it is not often that musicians get

*Revival of interest in antiquarian music, especially Church music, recurs periodically, and is due to more than one cause. Sometimes it marks a pause or transitional state in musical development when it is not clear what course music is going to take. This happened between the death of Purcell and the arrival of Handel, when conservative musicians such as Tudway and Dean Aldrich, found little that they cared for in the newest writings for the Church, which they thought too secular in style, and turned back to the old Church composers. The present revival (if there is one) seems to be partly, but not altogether, due to a similar cause. It is not, I think, of ecclesiastical origin, and is favoured by musicians of the advanced school itself, who, having destroyed the key system, find special value in the music, which was written before the key system was devised, or at any rate firmly established.

a chance of hearing Purcell's works, especially his larger works, and their chance of reading them is nearly as small, the fact being that (except for some songs and anthems) Purcell's music is difficult to obtain. For though there is a fairly large proportion of it in print, the older editions are not very commonly met with, and the best modern editions are expensive. The Purcell Society is working its way slowly, but surely, through its task of publication, but its sumptuous volumes are beyond the reach of most musicians, while for any use they are to choirs and choral societies they might just as well not exist at all. No one can be very enthusiastic about music which he can never hear and seldom read; so when students come upon the name of Purcell as that of our greatest master they make a note of it for examination purposes and take his music for granted without troubling any more about it.

It must be owned that critics and historians do not make it easy for the young musician to understand Purcell's merits and qualities. An account, more or less accurate and profound, will, of course, form a necessary chapter in any History of English Music; and there are besides the histories a few separate studies of him and his work, as well as essays and magazine articles. But it is curious how little special knowledge of him as a composer is displayed by many of those who feel constrained to write about him; and how contradictory the cleverest critics sometimes are in their estimates of his music.

Here is an account of the essential spirit of Purcell's music as it is summed up in the little volume on Purcell in *Bell's Miniature Series of Musicians*.* "The beauty of sanity, strength and joyousness—this pervades all he wrote." "There is no trace of the fever of ill health nor any morbidness in his creations. They are charged with energy—often elemental, volcanic energy that nothing can resist; and, at its lowest, the energy is the energy of robust health and a keen appetite." "In his music we have the full and sweet and healthy expression of all that was fair and sweet and healthy in this England of ours" (pp. 10-12 and 76-78).

After this we may turn to a distinguished foreign critic who has given a few well-considered paragraphs to Purcell.† This is how he sees him:—"Son art est plein de grâce et de délicatesse, bien plus aristocratique que celui de Lully: c'est du Van Dyck en musique; tout y est d'une extrême élégance, fine, aisée, un peu exsangue." "Ce charmant artiste, maladif, de tempérament débile, avait quelque chose de féminin, de frêle, de peu résistant. Sa langueur poétique fait son attrait et aussi sa faiblesse." The writer finds among other defects "un manque de souffle, une sorte d'épuisement physique, qui

* "Purcell," by John F. Runciman. 1909.

† "Haendel," par Romain Rolland. "Les Maîtres de la Musique." Alkan. 1910. A book for all good Handelians.

l'empêche de mener jusqu'au bout de superbes idées." The whole passage is interesting and should be read. A few sentences extracted from it, of course, misrepresent it. All, however, that is wanted here is to show that what to one writer displays the elemental and volcanic energy of robust health, to another is elegant, delicate, somewhat anæmic, marked by poetic languor and a kind of physical exhaustion.

What is the student to make of it?

Probably, weighing one authority against another, he will decide that a critic of Rolland's eminence is the safest guide, and in future will picture to himself a sickly, refined Purcell, and reject the energetic healthiness of the other sketch. No doubt the latter is exaggerated, though there is plenty of breeziness and robustness in parts of Purcell's work. On the other hand, Rolland supports his view by dwelling on some of the peculiar qualities of his workmanship:—

"Des harmonies délicates, des dissonances caressantes, le goût des froissements de septièmes et de secondes, du flottement incessant du majeur au mineur, des nuances fines et changeantes, d'une lumière pâle, indécise, enveloppée, comme un soleil de printemps au travers d'un brouillard léger."

This description is very good and true, but it may be doubted if it necessarily implies anything sickly or morbid in Purcell. His craftsmanship was that of his period. It was his delight, we cannot doubt, to labour patiently at the expressive finish of his detail. In his love of minute detail he showed himself more akin to Bach than to Handel—that great master of the art of missing out the unessential. But Purcell's detail was that of his school. He and the musicians of his generation were always trying to find out new ways of expressing emotion, and they took pleasure in depicting griefs and despairs, religious ecstasies, amatory woes and the like. They are exercises in emotional expression and not symptoms of an unhealthy mind. If to anyone reading or copying Purcell's music it may sometimes seem as if the composition was overlaid with niggling chromatics and fussy discords, yet it is the fact that when one gets a chance of hearing a performance of any of his bigger works one does not perceive anything niggling or fussy in it. No composer gains more by being performed. Then the hearer discovers how the breadth and boldness of the general effect emerge, where one who is only a reader may have his attention unduly fixed on an encrustation of unessential detail.

Be that as it may, and whether we admire Purcell's workmanship or not, it is his; and no one can tamper with it without misrepresenting him. It is strange that anyone should want to take such liberties; but the fact remains (and here is another of the difficulties with which students have to contend) that a large proportion of the editions of Purcell's works—most of those, indeed, which are easily accessible—do not present his music as he wrote it. It is only of late years that it has again been recognised that it is an editor's duty to print the

notes exactly as his author left them. Down to the time of Goodison this had always been the excellent rule: the last two or three generations of editors, however, have too often gone on the principle that it was their duty to print, not what the composer wrote, but what they thought he ought to have written if he had been their pupil. Consequently anything that they regarded as strange, unusual, harsh, ugly, violent, crude—in fact, anything that did not conform to the rules of music as it was taught at the moment—was silently altered. Two of the worst offenders, unfortunately, were Boyce and Novello; and it is chiefly due to them that at the present day Purcell's Anthems are never performed exactly as he wrote them, unless in some choir where the choirmaster happens to be a scholar with time to spend on antiquarian research.

It is a matter of real importance, if we would understand Purcell rightly, to preserve all the little mannerisms and characteristic touches which are a feature of his workmanship. Some, perhaps all of them, are found in other writers besides Purcell; but in any case it is worth while to draw attention to a few of them for the benefit of students and possibly of future editors of late seventeenth century music. Before doing so, however, it may be well to refer to one or two of his general characteristics, which have been commented upon by several writers. One is his fondness for what has been called "word-painting," by which is meant the interpretation or emphasizing of a single word or thought by trying to reproduce the idea of it in music. In this, again, Purcell approximates more nearly to the manner of Bach* than to that of Handel, who, indeed, would probably have thought it old-fashioned. Handel's method was rather to picture a whole scene than to dwell on a number of suggestive details. Not that on occasion he could not indulge in some very effective word-painting;† but he let us know what his usual method was when he told us that in writing the *Hallelujah Chorus* he "did think he saw the heavens opened and the great God Himself." We may believe that as he wrote he would always try to picture the scene as on a stage. Not so Bach, and still less Purcell, who in this respect always remained true to the school in which he was trained. For this he is blamed by modern critics, who forget that he was doing (in some of the instances which they dislike the most) what had been not only permitted but enjoined, by the teaching of the preceding century. When his sailors

*If it is thought necessary to quote an example from Bach, the opening chorus of *O ewiges Feuer* will suffice, of which Parry (*Johann Sebastian Bach*, 1909, p. 449) writes: "The most characteristic feature is the quasi-realistic figure in which a long note is allotted to the first syllable of the word 'ewiges,' which suggests the meaning by its relation to the rapid polyphonic passages allotted to the other voices."

†E.g., the chorus of mocking Babylonians in *Belshazzar*—

"How broad the ditch! how deep it falls!
What lofty tow'rs o'erlook the walls!"

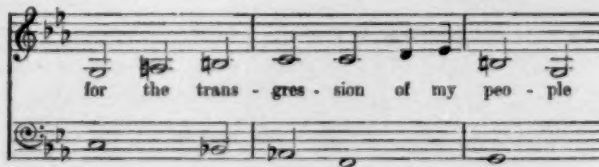
"go down to the sea in ships" the singer makes a descent of two octaves; when "they are carried up to heaven and down again to the deep" the voice moves with them; when the Psalmist is "like to them that go down into the pit" the singer goes down the scale; when the waters "go as high as the hills and down to the valleys beneath" he rises and sinks with them. But here the composer is merely carrying out the instructions of his predecessors. What Morley says is quite explicit (*Plaine and easie Introduction*, 1608, p. 178): "Moreover, you must have a care that when your matter signifieth ascending, high heaven, and such like, you make your musicke ascend: and by the contrarie where your dittie speaketh of descending, lowenes, depth, hell, and others such, you must make your musicke descend. For as it will bee thought a great absurditie to talke of heaven and point downward to the earth: so it will be counted great incongruitie if a musician upon the words he ascended into heaven should cause his musick descend, or by the contrarie upon the descension should cause his musick to ascend." The teaching of modern musicians is different—that "there is no true analogy between 'going down to the sea' and going down the scale; between being 'carried up to heaven' by the force of the winds and waves and being carried up to the top of one's voice by any influence whatever. Nor is there any obvious resemblance between the fearful chasms of the rolling sea—'the deep' as it is sublimely called in the Scriptures—and a very exceptional and often ludicrous note at the bottom of a bass voice."* There may be no such analogy; yet we need not for all that reject the convention of centuries. The association between ascent and rising notes is one that undoubtedly exists, and has probably existed ever since notes were written on staves.† Anyone can test the common sense of Morley's rule for himself by setting it at defiance and observing the "incongruitie" of the result. Besides these illustrations of height and lowness, there are other imitative effects which were employed by Purcell and his contemporaries. When Purcell set words about "nipping cold," or somebody's heart being "disengaged and cold," he describes the coldness very simply yet very vividly by introducing one or two unexpected flats: when the Psalmist's heart is "closely knit," the vocal parts are interwoven as closely as possible: while the man who walks, does so with a kind of stately prance: the

*Hullah's "Lectures on Musical History (Transition Period)," p. 217.

†There is always a tendency to speak of height and lowness in reference to matters where no idea of height and lowness is really present, merely because the gauge by which they are measured offers to the eye an appearance of height and lowness. This may be illustrated from the way in which we speak of fluctuations of temperature with reference to the thermometer, etc. But apart from the appearance of notes on the staff (which may have a good deal to do with the connexion of height with high notes), the degrees of the scale have always suggested the steps of a staircase (as the name implies); and to a singer at any rate there can be no doubt which is the top of the staircase. Cf. *Old English Edition*, XXIII., p. 9.

"voice of Thy thunder" is illustrated by a semiquaver run of an octave and a half. Some critics smile at all this; but, as a matter of fact, this side of Purcell's art (which, if we believed all that we read, we must regard as naive to the verge of grotesqueness), has been dwelt on a great deal too much. The word-painting is not nearly so conspicuous as critics (trying to be facetious) would have us believe; and the more exaggerated examples generally occur in some bit of descriptive declamation or quasi-recitative, as in the bass passages in "Praise the Lord, O my Soul, O Lord"; and in these particular passages, it must be remembered, Purcell is writing to show off his Bass singer's exceptional voice. Anyhow it is not for us to find fault if the result is admirable. It is absurd to condemn wholesale conventions which Purcell has accepted, which are inoffensive in themselves, and which may often be useful to composers in suggesting hints as to how to treat a passage in a beautiful and appropriate manner, just as the necessity for finding rhymes may suggest a beautiful idea to a poet. Purcell and Handel could each in his own way produce the finest possible results, and we need not dispute as to whose method is the most masterly.

Another of Purcell's characteristics is his use of "False Relations," which have been condemned as crudities by musicians from Burney onwards. Now they are better understood: or perhaps some may say that in these latter days we have become inured to them. The clash of a note simultaneously with the same note flattened or sharpened is sometimes very fine: sometimes it is less beautiful. Purcell, indeed, seems to have somewhat given up its use (so, at least, I believe) in his later work. In his early work it appears in its most uncompromising form. It seems to have been a device especially favoured by English musicians, from as early as the days of Dr. Tye, and, indeed, by some writers is regarded as a peculiarly English characteristic.* The good or bad effect produced by such a clash must depend, of course, upon the manner in which it is introduced. Generally speaking, the effect is good in contrapuntal writing, where the ear can follow the movement of the parts, which gives a reason for the sound. A passage like the following, too, is quite usual and unobjectionable, where the ascending and descending minor scales cause the clash. (From "Who hath believed our report?")

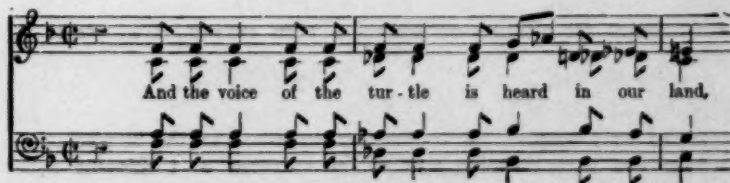


*See Walker's *History of Music in England*, Chapter XIII.

At the same time it must be owned that there are some instances which do not look as if they could sound satisfactory and must be hard to sing. As, for example, when the voice drops on to a note while an under voice is already sounding, or strikes simultaneously the same note flattened. Instances of this are found in Purcell's early work. Here are two examples from the earliest version of "In the midst of Life":—

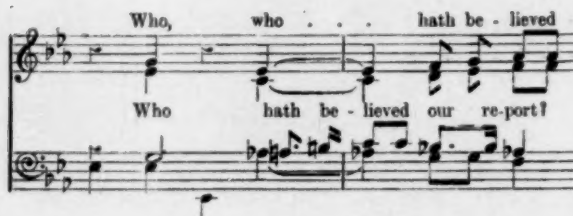


Here Purcell is trying to express in music the "bitter pains of eternal death," just as Dr. Tye and Orlando Gibbons before him both sometimes used a False Relation when they set words about death. But there is another rather interesting example which must be quoted from "My beloved spake," where Purcell uses the device for one of his word-painting experiments to imitate the cooing of doves:



This passage will not be found in modern editions of the Anthems. Novello, it is quite unnecessary to say, would not pass it, and printed G and F as the two last quavers of the second bar in the Treble voice part. Curiously enough, in its garbled version, it remains one of the best known passages of so-called Purcell; for Turle turned it into a double chant. It is a pity that Turle should have put his name (otherwise worthy of all respect) to the dreary caricature.

One more passage may be quoted where the tenor and bass move up together simultaneously on to A flat and A natural: perhaps it does not sound as ugly as it looks.

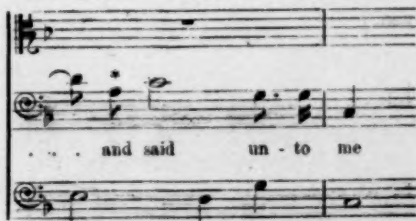


There is no need to quote more examples of these False Relations, which are quite well known and are not peculiar to Purcell. There are, however, some curious turns of phrase and unusual progressions which may be noted, as they are almost always altered by editors. It would take a small volume to print all the peculiarities which Purcell admitted and to which modern music masters might take exception. It is only possible to collect a few, mostly taken from the early anthems. Some of these "crudities" are found only in early work, and it seems probable that Purcell discarded them later. Some seem to be experiments that interested him at some particular time, and their presence may eventually prove to mark a period and so be useful in giving a clue to an approximate date. If so, that is yet another reason (if one were needed) for printing all Purcell's work exactly as he wrote it himself.

There is one device in writing which I think has caused great trouble to the editors of Purcell and his contemporaries. It can best be explained by examples, but it may be described as the interpolation between two notes forming part of the harmony of a skipping note which has no apparent connexion with the bass or the harmony. These skipping notes seem to be much the same as what Parry

describes as "ornamental notes which are extraneous to the harmony, but lie next to implied essential notes and are quitted by a leap." These he speaks of as an affectation peculiar to English composers in his volume of the *Oxford History of Music* (p. 275), and he expounds a theory of "abnormally abstruse appoggiaturas" to explain them and a more complicated passage in Pelham Humfrey's "Like as the Hart."^{*}

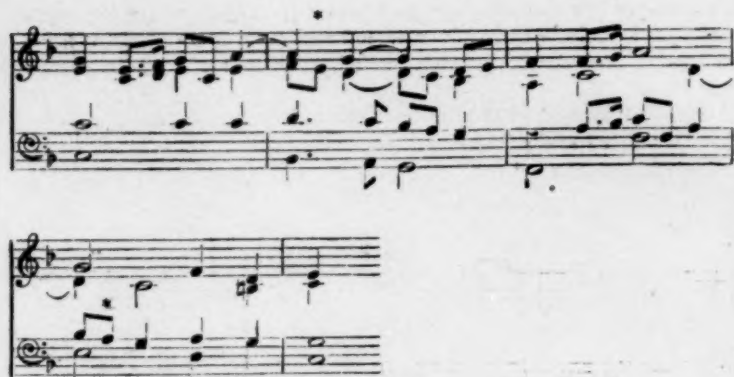
A good instance of what is meant will be found in the opening verse of "My beloved spake":—



The reader must be warned that this passage is not to be found as Purcell wrote it in modern editions of the anthem. The solution of the difficulty is perfectly simple when once it has been pointed out. In the filling up of the accompaniment some passing notes are required with which the difficult skipping notes agree. This is how the late

^{*}Without knowing what Humfrey really wrote in the passage quoted by Parry, one cannot discuss it profitably. It seems probable, however, that Boyce added the figuring when he printed the anthem. If Boyce's figures are rejected it is not impossible to contrive an accompaniment which will meet the requirements without calling in the aid of "abstruse appoggiaturas."

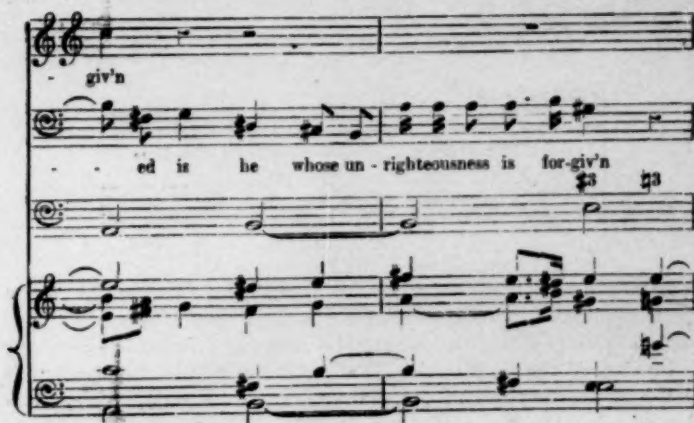
Professor Wooldridge accompanied the passage for the Purcell Society (Vol. I. of the Anthems):—



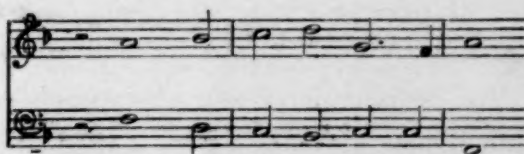
There is another instance of the same device in the opening of the big six-part anthem "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness," which also is an early work. Here, again, a little care in the accompaniment makes the skipping notes quite intelligible and easy to sing. [The tenor and bass entries only are given.]

Bless - ed is he whose un-righteousness is for -

Bless -

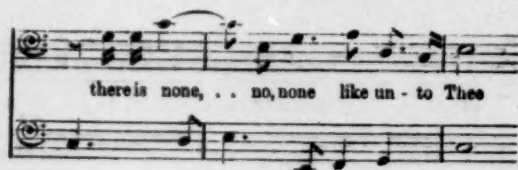


A curious kind of close which occurs once or twice in Purcell's early work, but not in his maturer compositions, is a descent of the voice to the key note, and, after anticipating it, skipping up to the third of the key. This we may call the Gibbons close, because Orlando Gibbons was the first to use it, as far as England is concerned. The well-known tune which he set to Wither's Song XIII. in the "Hymnes and Songs of the Chvrch," 1623, begins:



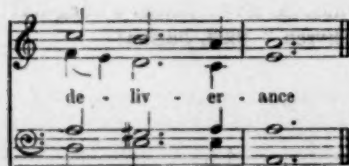
Ouseley reproduces this quite correctly in his "Collection of the Sacred Compositions of Orlando Gibbons," 1873. But of all the numerous hymn books which contain versions (or perversions) of Gibbons's tune, in not one (to the best of my recollection) is this close given as Gibbons printed it. The editors seem to be as much distressed at it as Novello was when he came upon it in Purcell's "Bow down

Thine ear," another early anthem, where it occurs in the bass solo, "Among the Gods":—



Novello alters this, of course, in his text, but it is to be put down to his credit that for once he notes the fact in these words: "This C is marked as an E in the Fitzwilliam MS., thereby injuring the grandeur and decision of the cadence." The Fitzwilliam MS., by the by, is Purcell's own autograph album, so we have here an excellent illustration of what an editor of the first half of the nineteenth century thought to be his duty to his author.

Something similar is found when the voice skips to the fifth of the key, after anticipating the third. The following example is also interesting as showing how Purcell sometimes went out of his way to avoid a third in his closing chord. It is in "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness," at the end of the short chorus "Thou shalt compass me about."



It is at the closes that Purcell seems to aim especially at some novelty of effect. Here is another close which evidently was very disagreeable to Novello, though its use was not confined to Purcell, and it is found in modern music. At any rate Mendelssohn uses it in his setting of "To God on high" in *St. Paul*, where, however, he may be borrowing from seventeenth or eighteenth century settings.* Its special feature may be described as a descent down the scale (in an inner part, generally alto) from the tonic or supertonic to the

*One would have expected Mendelssohn to have taken it from Bach, but I cannot find it in Bach's *Choralgesänge und Geistliche Arien*. Of course Bach's usual formula in such a place was to drop from the leading note directly to the fifth.

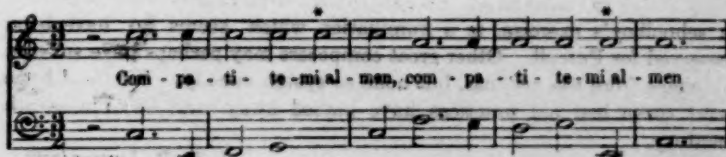
dominant. There are several instances in Purcell's anthems, from the early "Behold now praise the Lord" to "Praise the Lord, O my Soul." An instance is given from "Hear me, O Lord, and that soon":



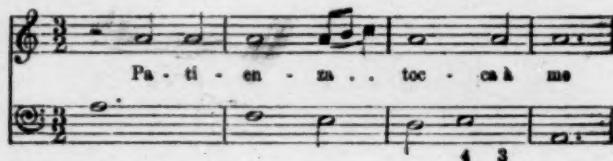
A better example is taken from "Rejoice in the Lord":



There is one more device peculiar to the seventeenth century which should be noted, because Purcell seems to have experimented with it once or twice about the years 1687-8. This is an unresolved fourth on the Dominant in a close, which is also found in Italian cantatas of the period. Particular attention should be paid to this, as editors are almost sure to assume that there is a slip of the pen, and silently to correct it. There is a good example in a cantata by Luigi Rossi (printed in the *Musical Antiquary*, Vol. II., p. 195), beginning "Del silentio":



Another example, from an anonymous Italian cantata, is valuable, as it gives figures which suggest that though the voice holds on there is a resolution of the fourth in the accompaniment:



The best illustration from Purcell's works of this device is found in the introductory symphony of the anthem "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem":

These examples will be enough to show the kinds of phrase for which Purcell's editors should be on the look out: and if any Moral for the Benefit of Young Editors is to be drawn from them, it is that no one should ever assume that Purcell did not write any particular combination of notes because modern musicians are not accustomed to it. For an editor to correct a solecism or alter a harsh progression, however unpleasing, if it comes to him with good MS. authority, is an unpardonable liberty. It is quite probable that Purcell may have found that some of his experiments were not satisfactory and discarded them himself in his later work; in fact, we feel sure that he did so. But for the Boyces and Novellos to sit in judgment and amend everything they failed to understand or disapproved of, as if they were correcting a schoolboy's exercise, is a humiliation which seems to have been reserved for Purcell. Other great composers may perhaps have suffered ill usage from the pedants, but none so systematically. We must hope that those bad old practices have passed away with the nineteenth century.

G. E. P. ARKWRIGHT.

A CONCERT AUDIENCE

And its Points of View

NOTHING is ever lost, but a great deal is often gained, by a sincere attempt to regard things from the view point of others; and, although in order to achieve the assimilation of all points of view one would need to be as many-headed as the hydra, the exercise, whether completely successful or not, is well worth an honest effort. So in this article I propose to consider music and concerts from the standpoint of various more or less typical sections of that public for whose entertainment it is the business of the professional musician to cater—musicians as a class being, I venture to think, a little too prone to imagine, and quite wrongly imagine, that the view point of their audience coincides with their own.

It will be remembered that a few months ago a certain weekly paper published an article which caused a good deal of contemptuous amusement in the higher musical world. It contained the stated opinions upon music of various persons of repute in art and letters; but since they are the opinions of intelligent and educated people they cannot be, or ought not to be, lightly dismissed. Let me quote some of them:—

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes "enjoys hearing good music of any type," but would not go out of her way to hear it.

Mr. Eden Philpotts "does not mind listening to music when opportunity offers," but never feels inclined to make the opportunity.

Mr. Hugh Walpole enjoys music immensely, but would always read a good book before he would go to a concert.

Mr. Galsworthy is fond of music, but can't bear Wagner.

Mr. H. G. Wells likes "classical and some modern music very much, but not to the extent of going to the opera. Music has to come to me, and I don't want more than an hour of it at a time."

Miss Rose Macaulay "likes to hear it, particularly bad music," but doesn't mind good either if the other is unobtainable.

In every case a "but"!

Mr. G. K. Chesterton states quite frankly that he is so ignorant of music that he doesn't even mind it! And, speaking as a professional musician, I am bound to say that there are times when I envy him his blissful immunity! But it is not his attitude nor the attitude of

people whose point of view is similar to his with which we are concerned at the moment.

A leader writer in the *Daily Chronicle* recently took exception to a speech of Sir Hugh Allen's in which the Principal of the Royal College deplored the "beastly tunes" which spoil the musical taste of the rising generation. The leader writer claimed that during the war men cheered themselves in the trenches and went to their death with the very tunes on their lips that Sir Hugh Allen condemns, and not humming Beethoven. Personally, I have to admit that when I went into action I was much too frightened and anxious either to sing a "beastly tune" or to hum Beethoven! But that is by the way. The really important matter is that the article in question gives us another point of view, and one that by reason of its exposition in the public Press claims more consideration than perhaps it intrinsically deserves.

Some years ago I lived with a friend whose rather original views upon music may be worth putting forward. He was an engineer by profession, an inventor of considerable ability, and, like some inventors, possibly a little eccentric.

"You advanced musicians," he would say, "are never satisfied without new sounds and new discords to titillate your tympanum. Consequently your taste is vitiated and you can no longer enjoy what gives me the utmost pleasure—a simple melody."

On rare occasions I would persuade him to come with me to a symphony concert, but after listening for half an hour he would always get up and go, so deeply rooted was this theory, and so much afraid was he of injuring the simple power of appreciation on which he set such store!

The view point of another man of my acquaintance is probably typical of a good many more. He likes a miscellaneous concert such, for example, as the Enoch Concerts at the Central Hall. The mixture of songs, instrumental numbers, recitations, and orchestral pieces pleases him. He enjoys the "business," as theatrical people would say, and takes an interest in the personalities of the different performers as they appear on the platform one by one. But wild horses will not drag him to what he describes as a "one man show," by which, of course, he means a recital by a single artist, notwithstanding that he is fond of music and quite a fair pianist himself.

Another typical point of view, which I may call the Victorian, is probably more current than people imagine because so many present day concert-goers were influenced in childhood by the mid-Victorian musical atmosphere. My own parents and grandparents, for instance, were Victorians of the Victorians—they couldn't possibly, needless to say, have been anything else. I suppose if you had asked them what piece of music they considered the finest ever written it is even chances that they would have plumped for "O rest in the Lord." And to

hear "O rest in the Lord" sung by an old-fashioned contralto with a voice like a refined fog-horn gave them as much pleasure as the most modern symphonic poem gives to the critical musician of to-day.

I well remember the time when I began to swallow, without being able to digest, the newer ideas about art. I grew too "high-brow" to sing the old people the songs that they liked and used instead to inflict upon them the German song classics which they neither wanted nor understood. In consequence my services as a vocalist were soon at a discount in the family circle. I was a silly young ass, of course (everyone goes through a similar stage, so I don't mind admitting it!), and if I had my time over again I shouldn't worry about high art but sing the old folks the songs they liked—"Darby and Joan," "The Land of the Leal," "The Lost Chord," aye, and "O rest in the Lord" if needs be. But, alas, Time, oblivious to the very existence of art, has rolled sternly on, merely adding one other to the accumulation of unavailing regrets.

The problem of adjusting the balance between duty to art and duty to the community is one of great difficulty, and how far a keen musician is justified in descending from the high level upon which he quite rightly prides himself in order to give pleasure to members of the community who are not musically so well educated as himself must always remain somewhat of an open question. What *does* admit of no dispute, however, is that he is never justified in descending from that high level for purely monetary considerations.

The January number of the British Music Society's Bulletin contains an article by Mr. Arnold Bennett. It is called "Apropos of a Chamber Concert," and presents yet another point of view. Mr. Bennett says some trenchant things about concerts in general and goes on to describe his own feelings at one particular concert, feelings which appear to have been in the main those of acute boredom. After a Haydn quartet came a Beethoven quartet. "An admirable performance," says Mr. Bennett, "but I was once again bored. Bored by an admirable performance of a late Beethoven quartet? Yes. My fault, of course. Still, there it is. You can say what you like about me except that I am not intelligently interested in music. I have travelled specially from Paris to London, out of pure artistic curiosity, to hear a new symphony. Yes, and I have attended festivals of British music. And if I am bored it is not I alone who am to blame.

"After the Beethoven quartet I leaned over to a lady in front of me who was sitting by herself. I asked her: 'What are you here for?'

"She said: 'I thought I would come and hear some music.'

"Are you bored?'

"Horribly.'

"Don't you feel as if you would sooner be at the Palladium?'

"I certainly do,' she said with enthusiasm.

"The third and final item on the programme was another classical quartet. Three of us left before it started. We had to. We had no other engagement, but we just had to leave, or we should have begun to recite Dante's 'Purgatorio' aloud. That concert failed, so far as we were concerned, on its programme."

Mr. Bennett concludes: "Well, I went to the Palladium. No sign there on the faces of the audience that they imagined they were doing a duty to art, or proving themselves the favoured of heaven! But there was the good sign of the night out. I heard Ella Shields sing her celebrated song 'Burlington Bertie' (who rose at eight-thirty). It was a highly distinguished performance. I would rank Ella Shields as an artist appreciably above 95 per cent. of the artists whom I have heard at serious concerts in the last ten years. It is a wide world, and I wish the shepherds of the musical valley would realise this."

This brings me to a point of view with which I can claim to be particularly familiar, since it is my own. And I am bound to confess that I am to a great extent in sympathy with Mr. Arnold Bennett. I have been horribly bored by concerts. I have even slept through a Beethoven quartet—a terrible confession, as I am well aware. But how many others are there who, if only they would be honest with themselves, are bored by certain parts of Beethoven? There is far too much cant and humbug over these matters. Many a man because a piece of music is looked upon as a standard work not only maintains to his friends but actually persuades himself that he enjoys it, whereas right down in the bottom of his heart he does no such thing. It is by no means always that I leave a concert hall with regret that a delightful evening has come to an end; there are times when my feelings could only be honestly expressed by "Thank heaven, that's over!" And if these are my feelings I am pretty certain that they are the feelings of a good many more.

Possibly one reason for this is the fact, too often overlooked by musicians, that music that is interesting to the player or singer is not necessarily so to the listener. The performer from his close view point becomes much more intimately acquainted with a work than is possible for any listener. Take, for example, the music of Brahms. Here it will be found, I think, that enthusiasts are usually people who play Brahms themselves, which points to the conclusion that the music of Brahms (some of the songs, perhaps, excepted), when approached from the aspect of the listener pure and simple, is either too subtle or not sufficiently obvious to make much appeal.

Then, again, a formal concert is in itself a hopelessly inartistic and uncomfortable affair. To be squeezed into a row like a cabbage in a field, but with less room and considerably less air! To sit for two hours in a boiled shirt, drenched by a blinding glare of electric light, and not allowed to smoke! And possibly to be bored into the bargain! Can one wonder that a concert is a form of entertainment that many

people, and even musical people, fight shy of? In the palmy days of English music, the Elizabethan period, were there such things as concerts? I doubt it. Music with the Elizabethans was more a domestic art than it is to-day. They knew, what we, perhaps, are in danger of forgetting, that the ideal place for music is the home. Unfortunately, in the nature of things, ideals are more or less unattainable; and just as long as we have the professional musician with us, who, to judge by his numbers, has every intention of staying, so long will the formal concert, whether for good or evil, flourish or appear to flourish. And this being the case, let the concert artist and the organizer of concerts see to it that they interest their audiences. Let them make music what it is, or ought to be, essentially a thing of joy, delight and pleasure. Education is well enough, and I am the last person to deny its huge importance, but I submit that there is a large section of the adult population who like music, who want to be interested and pleased, but who resent being educated, and who most certainly will not turn out of a night and pay money to be bored. Is not their point of view one which might be considered by artists with advantage to everyone concerned? And cannot their interest be stimulated and their wants be provided for without necessarily lowering any standards whatsoever? If so, there will be no further need to worry about education, for education will then follow of itself as surely as the night follows the day.

PAUL EDMONDS.

THE HEROIC IN ART*

"OUR poets have always blessed the world," said an Indian to me the other day, "and so many of yours seem to be engaged in reviling it." He said it sadly, as though to bless the poet's right office. Which, indeed, it is, and this newest age of poetry is in danger of forgetting it. "Let us praise great men and our fathers who were before us," is a challenge in a spirit which is too often denied by one of censure and reforming anxiety. To censure and reform are well enough, and the artist, as reasonably as another, may lend himself to these in his spare time, but the less he has to do with them as an artist the better for his art and for us. It is no good urging that the iniquities of the time are so deep as to preoccupy even the artist's mind. It has always been a wicked world, and we shall no doubt presently be examples to our erring posterity. And yet, remembering with admiration the scoldings of Pope and Byron and—who else is there?—we reflect that the poets have generally found it a world to bless, worth blessing. They have denounced folly and evil freely enough it is true; Milton, Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, even Shakespeare himself, could be terrible in anger, but it was but in harmony as it were with their praise, and it was always directed rather against evil than against the evil man. Some of our writers to-day seem to divide mankind into two classes. There are those of whom they disapprove, and these are to be labelled as of marked inferiority; and there are those of whom they—faintly—approve, and these they take under their patronage, and use for disciplinary purposes against the others. The element of wonder is not in their work. They do not praise great men and their fathers who were before them. They do not want to praise anything. They know that it is a wicked world, and their own virtue is in a continual state about it. They have seen through the heroic, and they are not going to be caught in any ridiculous postures of benediction.

I am not, perhaps I need hardly say, thinking of the gossip of artists and poets one about another. The little men never know how to behave themselves in this matter, the bigger ones do, and that is all there is to be said about it. It needs character and the finer parts of courtesy to be able to say that you don't care for a man's work without making it appear that you suspect him of something or another personally obscene. "Pompous poet left over from the nineteenth century," remarks a bright wit of Sir William Watson in a recent pub-

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lication. It may amuse some people, though it is hard to believe it. For myself, I see no difference between that and spitting in Sir William Watson's face across the dinner table; one is as much an offence against common decency as the other, and this without any reference whatever to poetic worth. It is a remark that has not even the merit of intending to correct; it is intended to hurt, wantonly, and is contemptible. And it is of a kind common in the gossip of which I have spoken, but it is important only by the standards of gossip, and has no relation to the far more serious question of the artist's attitude towards life in his art. In this some of the most gallant and chivalrous men in contemporary literature have been, it seems to me, misled into too brooding a pity over a lost world. The great tragic poets have always seen that man in the end was greater than the ruin in which he fell, even though the ruin was of his own character and resolution. Do we learn this from Mr. Galsworthy, for example? And I ask the question out of an affectionate admiration for almost everything that Mr. Galsworthy has written. Even Mr. Shaw has spent half his life in pointing out how stupid man is rather than singing how magnificently tragic he is, and Mr. Shaw has greater genius and a larger heart, I think, than any writer later than Mr. Hardy. And where the masters justify themselves by their own excellence, the lesser men fall into mere plaintiveness. Where Mr. Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy are gravely or wittily compassionate, Mr. . . . and Mr. . . . are petulant, waspish, tiresome.

The contrast in poetry is evident everywhere. It is true that nearly all bad poetry, to-day as always, is of the vague visionary kind that calls out that "all's right with the world" without a glimmering of Browning's philosophic basis. But a thing is not to be judged by its abuses, and never more than at this moment has the mind of man been hungry for the poetry of assertion, weary of that of negation. To stir the imagination poetry must first have the essential qualities of sharpness, definition, intimacy. To hear someone asserting that man is divine and the rest of it, without any conviction arising from careful examination of the premises and without any personality of expression, is revolting. The pretended prophet is the most ridiculous figure among men. But, given this fundamental thought, it is inspiring to find how commonly the poets do conclude that, in the greatest sense, all's right with the world, and that those who return from their speculative travels with this assurance upon their lips are they who most deeply move their fellows and throw out the widest influence. Mr. Masfield is a case in point. Mr. Ralph Hodgson is another. Mr. Masfield has provoked a certain amount of criticism on technical grounds, naturally enough, but he has provoked a great deal of savage antagonism for the strangely inadequate reason that he, as a poet, has found the world beautiful, and man noble, and has been at no loss to say so as repeatedly as possible. But while some smaller poets than he, engaged themselves for the most part in trying to create poetry not out of great

love but, as a recent writer in the *Times* very aptly put it, out of faint dislikes, have mowed at Mr. Masfield in distress, the very considerable public that reads poetry with understanding and as a spiritual necessity, have found in him a poet who is a master of his craft on the one hand, a precisian, an aristocrat of words, and on the other hand a man of great humility in the presence of life, one who thinks of himself as superior to nothing, one who understands, one who devoutly and in joy blesses the world. And the public buys his books, and reads and cherishes them, and knows that he is a poet of durable worth against all the complaints of envy or perversity. The same may be said of Mr. Hodgson, not yet so well known, but as sure of wide recognition and for the same reason. His "Song of Honour" blesses the world, knows the world for a heroic thing, is not ashamed of its fervours. I think of poems like this when I remember the critic who thought it indelicate of me to make Abraham Lincoln in my play kneel in prayer after he had accepted his nomination. To name another poet, perhaps those who have followed Mr. J. C. Squire's work will observe, as I seem to do, a heartening transition from the poorer manner to the finer.

There are difficulties in both directions from this middle position, I know. Some admirable poets, immensely interesting to all who care for the art of poetry and make all the workings of the mind their province, have little of this worshipping serenity. They are chiefly troubled with their own spiritual or intellectual difficulties, curious, remote, having always some revelation in them not quite liberated. Their excellence must always escape many minds by nature sympathetic. John Donne was such a one. Mr. de la Mare in something like half of his poetry (the other half is all happy lucidity) is another. In the other direction we have the poets of assertion who win a large and, I suppose, a sincere following, and yet have none of the stricter qualities of poetry at all. But it is inexact to say of these that they win their popularity for the same reasons that Mr. Masfield and those others win theirs. There is the first question always of liking poetry or not liking it. Mr. Masfield may have more readers than Donne, but it is impossible to read either if you do not like poetry, and it is equally impossible to read Mr. . . . or Miss . . . , who have many more readers than those two poets together, if you do like it. The point is that, given the essential poetic quality in each case, the generality of people who know what that quality is will instinctively respond to the poet who blesses the world, and neglect the one who accuses it.

This movement of popular desire is nowhere marked more clearly to-day than in the drama. The new English-speaking theatre owes an immeasurable debt to Ibsen. Not that Ibsen's plays themselves are ever likely to be very readily intelligible to an English audience, and for that matter one is a little tired of the critics who exclaim against our perversity when we don't take to some Russian or Scandinavian

idiom of construction as though it were our own. An Englishman or American need not be wholly imbecile because he can't quite get the hang of Tchechov or Strindberg in the theatre. Nevertheless Ibsen did us an immense service. He taught the English stage again that the beginning of good drama is good writing and honest thinking. But the men who under his influence gave their own genius to the cleansing of our theatre of much that was false and incompetent, were very largely his disciples also in mistrusting the heroic, remembering rather how ridiculous the heroic had become than how excellent it is in its own proper being. And after the splendid leaders of this revolt we had a glut of playwrights who were obsessed with the dramatic merits of overcrowded back parlours and the seedy black coats of elderly bank clerks. The first direction of every new play was pretty certain to be something like this: "It is the sitting room of a lower middle-class family in the congested neighbourhood of a large industrial town. The wall-paper, furniture and carpet are alike faded and in lamentable taste. Mrs. . . . , faded like the rest, a woman of fifty, who speaks in a tired and querulous voice, is mending stockings. Her husband, a small man with a weak mouth and a little ragged beard, is reading the evening newspaper over his supper. His frayed cuffs are laid on the table beside him . . . ,," and so on, desperately. Sometimes a dramatist using this genre could inspire it with passion, Mr. St. John Ervine for example, but the general atmosphere was of a depressed life, at best pathetic in defeat, more often negligible, never tragic or beautiful. The manner had its uses, being a necessary protest against the sham heroics of a theatre that had but two people in it, the actor-manager and his limelight man, but its moment is past, and there are signs everywhere of a larger, more imaginative life on the stage. The renaissance, if renaissance it is to be, has its dangers. A spurious romanticism of the kind that the hack playwright turns out so easily, is a far worse thing in the theatre than the most neurotic minor realism, and the insincere triumph-of-virtue dramatist is an even worse pest than his fellow poet. But we may look hopefully enough for dramatists who again shall bless the world as some of the poets are doing, men who will be simple in the presence of great themes and handle them without fear, not evading beauty with a shame-faced jest or confusing the heroic spirit with sentimentality. Then we shall be braced again in the theatre as the Greeks and the Elizabethans must have been. For, if I may be forgiven for quoting words of my own,

When the high heart we magnify
And the sure vision celebrate,
And worship greatness passing by,
Ourselves are great.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

THE DANTE SEXCENTENARY OF 1865

IN view of the sixth Centenary celebration of Dante's death, which will be held in Italy in September, 1921, it is interesting to look back to the sixth Centenary celebration of his birth, held in May, 1865, and to compare the state of national feeling in Italy fifty-six years ago with the feeling of to-day.

At the outset we are confronted with a fact which shows how immeasurably the national spirit in Italy has grown during the last half century, for though there were many students at that time and even more lovers of Dante, he was not then generally considered in the light of a bond between Italian speaking peoples; United Italy was too recent a creation for her great poet to be recognised as a national asset as our own Shakespeare had been recognised for many generations past. Strange as it may seem now, the fact remains that it was merely as an echo of the eager preparations for the Schiller Centenary Festival which was to be held in Germany in 1859 that the first hint of a Dante centenary was heard in Italy, and with a flattering imitation it was even proposed that the same year should be chosen.

It is pleasant to remember that it was to one of our own countrymen that Italy owed the avoidance of this blunder. Dr. Henry Clark Barlow was a cultivated man who had studied medicine, but after taking his degree had turned to art and literature. In December, 1858, a letter from him appeared in the *Athenæum*, in which he pointed out that the year 1859 had no connection with Dante and that it would be far better to wait until 1865, the sixth centenary of the poet's birth. Soon after this letter appeared a committee was formed in Florence with Prince Ferdinando Strozzi as chairman, and at its first meeting Dr. Barlow's suggestion was adopted.

This matter decided, the committee set itself to propound possible schemes, and it is impossible not to wish that some of them, at least, had been carried through. One of the most ambitious was the completion of the Loggia di Lanzi; the Arcade was to be taken round the remainder of the Piazza Signoria and a statue of Dante placed in the middle. Another idea was to make a new street through the maze of by-ways between the head of the Ponte Vecchio and the Belvedere hill, leading up to a statue of Dante which should proudly dominate the Boboli Gardens; but this, too, fell through, and the scheme actually

started was the preparation of a great edition of Dante's works, to be fully illustrated and published by subscription. This last proposal appealed strongly to Italian scholars, but it was at once realised that it could not be carried through alone—England and America must help—and a prospectus was drawn up, Dr. Barlow being asked to be the foreign member of the committee and to push the sale in England. But though the proposed monument might be a worthy one, the other countries to which it was suggested failed to support Italy in her resolve; Lord Palmerston, it is recorded, was the only one of the British Ministers to respond, and from lack of funds the project fell through.

Although the first schemes proposed were not destined to be fulfilled, one great result had been achieved, for it was now an established fact that the celebration was to take place, and the interest in the coming event deepened and widened.

This interest was largely increased by the publication of the *Giornale del Centenario di Dante Alighieri*, issued at short intervals from the beginning of the year 1864, in which accounts were given of the preparations that were being made for the festival, and essays and articles published on the poet and his works. The cover bore a portrait of Dante between two shields, one bearing the arms of Florence and the other the arms of Savoy, the whole surmounted by a star, symbolic of the light of Dante's genius.

In his Introduction to the first number the Editor stated: "In this Centenary of Dante, Italy will celebrate not only the birth of the greatest Christian poet, but also the fruitful idea of the Italian *Risorgimento*, by him first presented and proclaimed, sustained and defended."

From this time forward the excitement increased until it reached fever height; visitors from all parts of the world flocked to Florence at the beginning of May, the King arrived on the 14th, and at the opening of the Dante Exhibition the Council presented him with a sword of magnificent workmanship, the blade engraved with the words *Dante:—al primo Re d'Italia*.

The city was decorated with a profusion of garlands and banners, and the places associated with Dante were marked by appropriate inscriptions; that on the Portinari Palace ran:

"O voi che per la via d'Amor passate,
Volgete uno sguardo alle mura ove nacque
Nel Aprile, 1266, Beatrice Portinari,
Prima e purissima fiamma, che acceso
Il genio del divino poeta, Dante Alighieri."

The words addressed by Dante to Beatrice—*O luce, o gloria della gente umana!*—were printed on the title page of the official Guide to

the Festival as a tribute to the poet himself, and the preface concluded with the words: "And if the work of national regeneration be not yet complete, we behold, at least, an earnest of its approaching and happy consummation in this reunion of Italians in one thought, one sentiment and one most holy name—the name of the precursor of the unity and freedom of Italy—Dante Alighieri."

How fully this claim was justified is shown by the fact that this Festival was the first public occasion at which all the provinces of United Italy had been represented, and that with them were associated delegates, not only from Rome and Venice—so soon to be included—but from Trieste and Istria, the *Italia Irredenta* which was not to be redeemed until the eve of the sixth Centenary of the poet's death.

On the morning of the great day the delegates were received in the Piazza Santo Spirito by the councillors and magistrates of the city, accompanied by representatives of all classes of the citizens—professors, lawyers, merchants, artists and musicians—and the procession passed across the Santa Trinità bridge and through the Piazza del Duomo to the Piazza Santa Croce. The whole route was gaily decorated, seven hundred banners were carried, bands played, bells rang and cannon were fired. The Piazza had been fenced in and tiers of seats erected round the statue, and on the wooden walls of the enclosure were hung thirty-eight pictures of scenes in Dante's life, flags and streamers waved above it, and at the four corners were placed the gonfalons of Rome, Venice, Ravenna and Florence.

The Gonfaloniere of Florence, Count Cambray-Digny, opened the proceedings, and alluding to the fact that Dante had been the first Italian man of letters to write in the vernacular, he acclaimed him as the giver of a common tongue to disunited Italy, a gift which carried with it the spirit of a common nationality, so that it was not only as poet and philosopher that he was being honoured, but as the prime mover of the *Risorgimento*, concluding with the emphatic words: "Let the whole world know that this Festival is none other than the solemn confirmation of the compact which unites together the scattered members of the ancient mother of modern civilisation."

The statue was then unveiled by King Victor Emmanuel, and Padre Giuliani, the Professor of Dante Studies in the Institute of Higher Education, delivered a tribute in which he said that Providence had ordained that the celebration should be postponed, since a country divided against itself could not worthily commemorate one whose great desire had been to see the union of his *bel paese*, and that the glorious crown of his career was this moment, when all parts of Italy met together like the separated members of one family.

It was as a professor and not as a priest, that Padre Giuliani took part in the ceremony, for the Church held aloof from it and refused to allow any official sanction of a writer who had used his pen to point out the ecclesiastical abuses of his day. But the city of Florence

spared no pains to show that the once exiled poet was now accounted as her most honoured son; feasts and pageants, concerts and illuminations, crowded one upon another, and on the evening of the third day a wonderful performance of living pictures was given in the Pagliano theatre. A large frame was erected on the stage and groups of the most celebrated actors and actresses of the day appeared within it, representing scenes from Dante's poems, while illustrative passages were recited. Adelaide Ristori as Francesca di Rimini, Salvini as Count Ugolino, roused the admiration of all beholders, and it was said that the Ristori's declamation of Francesca's speech was alone worth a journey to Florence to hear. A banquet to the foreign delegates concluded the festival, when the principal speech was made by the Italian Ambassador to Athens, Count Terenzio Mamiani, who welcomed the guests, and in addressing the German delegates uttered some words which read to-day in the light of a prophetic foreboding. German scholarship is, he said, admired among Italians, but they "only ask this, that the Germans, who are accustomed to adore and acknowledge God in all things, would adore Him also in the destiny of nations and their independence. In Italy there are neither conquerors nor conquered; our patricians march at the head of our regeneration and the people follow independently and with goodwill, and the enemies of our new institutions find more security beneath the shadow of the *Statuto* than they did under the wings of our despotic friends."

Whether Dante would have endorsed the remark of one of the speakers that his conception of a monarchy that would bind the peoples of Italy together had found its fulfilment in Victor Emmanuel is perhaps somewhat doubtful, for a study of his treatise, *De Monarchia*, shows that the monarch whom he longed to see upon the throne was not a constitutional King, but a despot. Like most ardent partisans, he presupposes the goodness of his cause and confuses argument with evidence. For example, he alludes to Virgil's fourth Eclogue, and says that as the golden age is depicted as an age of justice, and as justice is only possible in an all-powerful monarch, it is clear that Virgil was in favour of despotic rule. An argument such as this could only be admitted as evidence if it were incontestibly proved that justice cannot be as successfully embodied in a democracy as in an autocracy.

Nor is this flaw in his reasoning confined to special instances; it underlies his whole thesis, for when he argues that the Roman State was strong and prosperous because it was one and indivisible and that all that the world needs is the re-establishment of such a State under the rule of an Emperor, he omits to bring forward any proof that the Roman State was indeed indivisible, and ignores the evidence which exists that it only prospered while it gave free expression to the opinions of the people as well as of their governors. Not co-operation, but control, was his great panacea for the troubles of the world. "O

race of men," he exclaims in the first book, "by how great storms and losses, by how great shipwrecks, hast thou by necessity been vexed, since, transformed into a beast of many heads, thou hast been struggling different ways, sick in understanding, equally sick at heart,"* words which may well have inspired Chaucer's lines in the *Clerkes Tale*:—

" O stormy peple, unsad and ever untrewē,
And undiscrete, and chaunging as a vane,
Delytyng ever in rombel that is newe,
For like the mone ay waxe yē and wane,"

for Chaucer had travelled much in Italy and his poems show an intimate knowledge of the works of "the grete poete of Itaille, that highte Dante."† It was to no abstract monarch that Dante looked to control the stormy and untrue Italians: the head of the Holy Roman Empire was the deliverer on whom his hopes were fixed, and he likens their rejection of the Emperor Henry to the foolish action of an infant that is dying of hunger, yet thrusts away its nurse. The little State of Luxemburg was famous at that time for the fortifications which made its capital one of the strongest cities in the world; but to Dante, State and capital alike were important merely as they were the cradle of Henry the Seventh. Son of the Count of Luxemburg, he was born in 1270, and both his father and his elder brother were killed in battle when he was eighteen years old. He received knighthood from Philip the Fair of France and married Margaret of Brabant; his younger brother, Baldwin, who had been educated in Paris, was consecrated Archbishop in 1308, and as one of the Electors of the Empire he promised Henry to help him to secure the crown when the Emperor Albert was assassinated by his nephew, John of Suabia in 1308. Philip the Fair was eager for the election of his brother, Charles of Valois, but though strongly supported, Henry of Luxemburg eventually won the prize and was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle. In 1310 he came to Italy with the avowed intention of healing the feuds between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, and Dante's long-cherished dream seemed about to become a reality. It was at this time that he wrote his epistle to the Princes and Peoples of Italy, in which he says:—"Behold, now is the accepted time in which the signs of consolation and peace arise. Henceforth let thy heart be joyful, O Italy, who deserveth to be pitied even by the Saracens, but who straightway shall be looked upon with envy throughout the world, because thy bridegroom, the solace of the earth and the glory of thy people, the most clement Henry, divine Augustus and Cæsar hastes to the nuptials. Dry thy tears and blot out the traces

*Church's translation.

†The Monkes Tale.

of sorrow, O most beauteous, for he is at hand who will free thee from the bonds of the impious; who, smiting the wicked, will destroy them at the edge of the sword and will hire his vineyard to other husbandmen who at the time of harvest will yield the fruit of justice."†

But time passed on and Henry did not come to Florence, but remained in the North, fighting battles and struggling with innumerable difficulties; his brother was killed and pestilence decimated his troops. It was in April, 1311, that Dante addressed the letter to the Emperor which has distressed so many of his admirers. The prevalent conception of the poet is of one whose soul was as a star and dwelt apart, solemn and majestic, and his use of terms which cannot properly be applied to any human being, strike a strange and jarring note:—"Tarry no longer," he writes, "for men are beginning to cry—Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? When I saw you, I said silently to myself, Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."†

It is in the same letter that he breaks out into fierce denunciation of the city that had exiled him:—"You waste the spring as well as the winter in Milan. Do you not see that Florence is the stinking fox, the darting viper, the sick sheep that infects the flock? Up, then, thou noble son of Jesse, smite Goliath, make the Philistines to flee and set Israel at liberty."†

But Henry did not come; the summer passed, the autumn came, and while at Genoa in October his beloved wife fell sick and died; the messengers whom he sent to Florence were treated with scorn; his coronation in Rome was opposed by the Pope and his soldiers had to fight their way through the streets of the city. Nor, when he returned to Tuscany, did his fortunes improve; he besieged Florence, but disease again attacked his army, and after retreating to Pisa he died at Buonconvento, near Siena, in August, 1313, either of fever or from poison, and was brought to the Duomo in Pisa for burial. His body was afterwards removed to the Campo Santo, where his tomb may still be seen with that sleeping figure upon it of which the French Dante scholar, J. J. Ampère, said:—"Il a l'air de dormir mal."

He may, indeed, seem to sleep unrestfully, that storm-tossed and disappointed Emperor, but the opinion of some of Dante's biographers that his death may be laid at the poet's door, is surely far-fetched and over-strained. "Through him that life, the noblest he had ever known, had been brought to an untimely end," says Dean Plumptre; "and with it had vanished all hopes of a theoretic empire. Of all forms of discipline for such a nature as Dante's that was the hardest to bear. He may have found some gleam of comfort in the thought that there was a throne and crown in Paradise for the hero whom he had tempted to an enterprise for which Italy was not yet ripe."

That the death of Henry meant the downfall of Dante's hopes and plans is undoubted, but that the mighty lord and potentate was tempted to his doom by the persuasions of a penniless exile is scarcely credible; the man of thought has outlived the man of action and, for one who remembers Henry of Luxemburg to-day there are hundreds to whom the name of Dante is a household word; but the relative importance of the two men now must not betray us into imagining that the scales dipped the same way while they lived. Henry was then at the pinnacle of earthly glory, Dante ate of the crumbs that fell from rich men's tables.

But though the Emperor was probably oblivious of the poet, it is to the poet that he owes his immortality; in the pages of the historians he is but one of a fleeting crowd of monarchs, statesmen and warriors, but to Dante he was the Desire of all nations, the Daystar who should bring light and healing to men, and when death snatched him away from earth the poet looked up to heaven and saw where Beatrice pointed to the place that awaited his hero—

" On that great throne whereon thine eyes are fixed
For the crown's sake already placed upon it,
Before thou suppest at this wedding feast
Shall sit the soul (that is to be Augustus
On earth) of noble Henry, who shall come
To redress Italy ere she be ready."*

And, though Dante's idea of a beneficent and universal monarchy was but the baseless fabric of a vision, he was not the less a prophet, nor have his hopes been unfulfilled; for this monarchy which obsessed his thoughts was a means to an end and not an end in itself. It was not because he desired a despotism for its own sake that he advocated it, but because he looked upon a despotism as the only way of terminating the strifes and dissensions of his distracted country—his real desire was justice, as it was the desire of Plato centuries before his day. The Roman doctrine that law must be the foundation of the State had become corrupted and confused by the belief that law must be administered either by an all-powerful Emperor or an infallible Pope, and it was this belief which gave rise to those two fiercely contesting parties, the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. But though Dante seems at first sight a whole-hearted advocate of imperial rule, a careful study of his arguments reveals the fact that behind them lies an idea familiar enough to us, but in his day a startling innovation. The law on which the State is based, he says, is to be administered in things temporal by the Emperor, the successor of Cæsar, and in things spiritual by the Pope, the successor of Peter, but in both cases the power is not inherent in the man, it is derived from God, and it is only as Pope and Emperor

*Longfellow's translation.

fulfil their duty as Vicars of God that they are entitled to allegiance. This was a bold doctrine indeed, a doctrine that resulted in the condemnation of his book by the Church, nor is it altogether surprising that it should have been placed upon the Index.

It may seem strange that an intellect so lofty and so far-seeing as Dante's should not have realised that justice administered by a despot is bound to result not in freedom, but slavery, but in judging of his opinions it must never be forgotten that six centuries divide his world from ours: the national spirit which so dominates modern life and thought was then but a dimly discerned vision—scarcely more credible than comprehensible—and the man who denounced faction and self-seeking, and declared that the ideal State was one in which every individual should have freedom and leisure to perfect himself in prudence and wisdom, was nothing short of a revolutionary.

Nor must we forget that though Dante tried to fit the yoke of the Holy Roman Empire upon the neck of Italy, it was he, at the same time, who forged the weapon which was to aid her in cutting herself free. The first to employ the vernacular in literature, he flouted all the canons of Italian scholarship, and while he was the champion of mediævalism he was all unknowingly the herald of the new world.

Who can doubt, therefore, that, had he lived to see Italy freed and united, he would have rejoiced with all his heart and recognised that this was the fulfilment of his dreams, even though no autocratic ruler held the States of Italy together with an iron grip.

It was in June, 1865, that some workmen who were repairing the church of San Francesco at Ravenna came upon a wooden chest, inscribed:—

Dantis ossa a me
Fra Antonio Santi
Hic posita An. 1677.
Die 18 Octobris.

The urn in which the poet's bones were supposed to be preserved was at once opened and found to contain only a few withered laurel leaves and two or three bones which were lacking when those in the chest were counted; the skull was measured and found to correspond exactly with the death mask in Florence, and it was considered that there could be no reasonable doubt that the bones must have been removed from the urn in which they had been placed by Dante's patron, Count Guido Novello da Polenta, lord of Ravenna, on one of the several occasions when the Florentines attempted to recover the remains of their exile. It was in 1519 that delegates from Florence came armed with the authority of Pope Leo the tenth—eager, as were all the Medici, for anything that could enhance the glories of his native city—but the bones could neither be found nor their destruction proved,

though it was suggested that they had been burnt. The discovery of the chest, however, showed that the authorities of the convent knew where they were, and that more than a century afterwards Antonio Santi, who is known to have been Chancellor of the convent at the time, made a verification of them and had it recorded upon their hiding place.

It was only natural that the discovery should excite the greatest enthusiasm, and the people of Ravenna immediately decided upon a Festival of their own. On the 24th of June, the day of St. John, patron saint of the city which had driven Dante from its gates, the bones were placed in a crystal coffin, ornamented with gilding, and taken to the Chapel of Braccioforte with the most solemn ceremonies; delegates from Florence were present to show that Ravenna was forgiven for refusing to give up her sacred charge, and one of the inscriptions on the dais upon which the coffin rested during the lying in state bore words that showed that Dante's persecution was no longer to be remembered:—"Non Firenze, ma la ira furica di parte, dinnava a perpetuo esilio" ("Not Florence, but the fury of party, condemned him to perpetual exile").

On the 26th of June the bones were laid in their tomb, and Padre Giuliani, who was present as one of the Florentine delegates, made the funeral oration, and gave it as his opinion that it must be a miracle that had revealed the bones at that particular moment, "to justify the prophetic declaration of the hoped-for unity and prosperity of Italy."

Fifty-six years have passed away and once more a "miracle" has been wrought, for as the preparations begin for the celebration of the sixth centenary of Dante's death a fresco has been discovered at Ravenna which is believed to date from the 14th century. The church of San Francesco, adjoining the tomb, is being restored in view of the approaching festival, and the fresco was discovered during the operations by Don Antonio Rotondi on the wall above the spot where Dante's grave was made by Count Guido. In dress and pose the figure in the fresco resembles the bust over the tomb, which was executed by Pietro Lombardi for Bernardo Bembo; and Professor Gerola, Superintendent of National Monuments in Italy, pronounces it to be that of Dante. As in the bust, so in the fresco, the poet is represented as draped in a flowing cloak, his eyes upon the ground and his chin supported by his hand, and the discovery at this particular moment will lend lustre to the coming festival, as the discovery of the bones did to the festival of his birth, recalling once more his prophetic declarations of the unity of Italy.

The dream of a universal monarchy has been revived in our own day, with results that we all know. And in the light of those results the remarks of a German commentator—Dr. Karl Witte*—who wrote some forty years ago, make strange reading to-day.

*Essays on Dante.

There is among Italians, he says, "an unlimited confidence in the lasting power of united Germany and a really romantic reverence for our grey-headed Emperor-hero, whom they love to call Barbabianca, and wherever the knightly figure of this heir to Germany's empire has been seen on the other side of the Alps he has won all hearts. The poet's dream of a united Italy is realised; Henry the Seventh did not indeed bring the Guelfs to recognise the Empire, but Kaiser Wilhelm, heir of the Luxemburger's crown and the representative of his blood, has won Venice for Victor Emmanuel at Sadowa and opened the doors of the Quirinal for him at Sedan."

It is not difficult to read between the lines of this statement, and when he goes on to explain that Dante's idea of a united Italy was not one kingdom, but a collection of separate States, "guarded and guided by a supreme power," it is evident that Wilhelm Barbabianca was to succeed to the over-lordship of Frederick Barbarossa. But—as we are reminded by Petrarch in his magnificent Ode to Italy—

"Well did kind Nature, guardian of our State,
Rear her rude Alpine heights,
A lofty bulwark against German hate,"*

and that bulwark has proved to be no weaker to-day than it was in the long-distant past.

The sounds of conflict were still loud in every ear when the sixth centenary of Dante's birth was celebrated; the great fight for her freedom was not yet over and the land was seething with excitement and unrest; but though there were some who objected that it was too soon to hold such a festival, their fears were not justified, for the festival did more to heal wounds and bind discordant elements together than any other scheme that could have been devised.

And now that the centenary of Dante's death is about to be celebrated, the sounds of a still greater conflict echo through the world. Not the freedom of an individual country, but of the whole of our civilisation, hung there in the balance. And though autocracy has been defeated and put to flight, the minds of men everywhere are seething with the unrest and the excitement which are the inevitable effects of so terrific a struggle. "Italy is shaken to the very core!" cry some of her anxious friends; and others—even more apprehensive—declare that she is on the verge of a revolution that will undo all the work accomplished in the last sixty years. If such a fate were indeed assured to her, the hearts of all who love Italy might well fail them for fear, but may we not look upon the coming festival as a happy omen? And will it not prove to possess a power as binding and an influence as healing as that of the festival of 1865?

*Lady Dacre's translation.

For is not Dante's life-story a type and a symbol of the story of all great endeavour? Learning by suffering, victorious by defeat, he has at last reached the climax of achievement through seeming failure. He owes his position as a world-force not to the fact that he was a keen politician and patriot who worked for the unification of Italy, but to the fact that his dreams were shattered and his plans rendered abortive, and that—an exiled and heartbroken man—he gathered up his hopes and aims in the immortal poem, which, born of despair, was to prove the most powerful of factors in the accomplishment of his abandoned design.

And thinking of this, may not Dante's beloved Italy, and with Italy the whole of the civilised world, take heart of grace and believe that its present state of danger and difficulty is but the rough road that leads to a glorious goal? We, like Dante, have sighed for a world-peace that should make possible the progress and the prosperity of the whole human race, and we have been answered not with peace but a sword. But though the world is still reeling from the effects of that terrible blow, the harvest of its suffering—even as the harvest of Dante's suffering—will surely be reaped in due season. It is not in the sway of a despot strong enough to crush down all opposition that we look for peace to-day, but in a brotherhood of nations, moved by the spirit of goodwill one toward another. And in our efforts for its establishment upon earth, whence can we better draw inspiration than from him whose later utterances so far surpassed his earlier, from him who learned through exile and persecution the great truth that love, and not force, is the motive power of the world, and who, looking into the depths of divine light, saw that the whole discordant and disunited universe can be bound up into one by love, as scattered leaves are bound into a volume!

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Cio che per l'universo si squaderna!*

MARY BRADFORD WHITING.

*Par. 33, 85.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Johann Sebastian Bach, translated from the German of Johann Nikolaus Forkel. By Charles Sandford Terry. Constable, 21s. net.

Forkel's well-known monograph is a classic of its kind, a book whose interest is real, although limited, and chiefly retrospective. As Dr. Terry points out in his Introduction, Forkel wrote "at a time when Bach's greatness was realised in hardly any quarter." His book is "the first to claim for Bach a place among the divinities, using him to stimulate a national sense in his own people." By vindicating Bach's genius, by asserting that "the publication of his works in an authoritative text would be a national service" and recommending "the formation of a society to make these works known and to promote their study," he showed astonishing perspicacity.

With regard to the music of his own time, his outlook was less discerning. He liked neither Haydn, nor Mozart, nor Beethoven. "Modern art," he writes in 1802, "displays such poverty and frivolity that it may well shrink from putting itself in context with great literature"—an attitude as old as musical criticism, and, despite appearances, no less frequent a hundred, or three hundred and fourscore years ago, than it is nowadays.

Forkel's work is to be considered more as a curio than as a reference book. Indeed, the translator has found it advisable to write an additional chapter, "Bach at Leipzig, 1723-1750," to "supplement Forkel at the weakest point of his narrative." But the chronological and bibliographical appendices, which occupy over half the volume, will be found invaluable for reference purposes.

M. D. C.

The Life of Sir Henry Bishop. By Richard Northcote. The Press Printers, 12s. net.

An ideal little book for anyone who wishes to know the facts about Bishop's life and works; concise, accurate as far as one can judge, and readable, with a minimum of comment. The print is clear, but the smallness of it and the glaze of the paper compel old age to take a magnifying glass to half of the book. An index is lacking.

Patriotism makes us wish to think the best we can of the most industrious of English composers who earned a knighthood and a medallion on the Albert Memorial and died in penury. He wrote melodies on Alberti basses, in rigid metre, with inevitable closes, tuneful glees without the musicianship of Webbe and Stevens or any real feeling for the English language—he failed entirely to understand some able criticism by Edward Fitzgerald on a collection of songs he was editing. He adapted for the English stage Mozart and Boieldieu (whom he called the French Mozart) and played tricks with Shakespeare. Weber wrote of him as "my so-called rival" and as "a man of talent, but without originality," with which it is interesting to compare Spohr's

(see, Grove, *sub. voc.*) comment on his junior, S. S. Wesley. His fame rests on his melodies "Home, Sweet Home" and "Mynheer van Dunck." He wrote as many songs as Schubert and Schumann put together, during a life contemporaneous with both of theirs.

Joseph Holbrooke and his Work. By George Lowe. Kegan Paul, 4s. 6d. net.

To write in satisfactory wise a copious book about a contemporary composer is a hard task. Except when the composer's characteristics and tendencies are unusual enough to suggest, and even to prescribe, some definite line of action, such books, in most cases, will be descriptive and narrative rather than critical. Accurately to focus a composer's output, convincingly to define the nature and extent of his contribution, together with the problems it may raise, is an undertaking the difficulty of which decreases only in proportion as the subject recedes in time. Failing some definition of that kind, or an attempt to deal with that subject from the controversial point of view, the best that a book can do is to bring forward material, to prepare the ground. That much Mr. George Lowe's has accomplished usefully. It comprises a full biography of Mr. Holbrooke, a survey of his activities as a critic, and thematic analyses of his works, with appreciations that are generally enthusiastic, but unprejudiced.

M. D. C.

John Field, of Dublin. By W. H. Grattan Flood. Martin Lester, Dublin, 2s. 6d. net.

It was worth while to devote thirty short pages to John Field, "inventor of the nocturne," 1782-1837. Spohr speaks somewhat precisely in 1802 of his "finished technique," his "touch full of inspired melancholy" (*schwärmerisch-melancholisch*) and his "spiritual" (*seelenvoll*) playing—a description which the author summarises baldly as "superb"; making up for this reticence, however, later by quoting Glinka's "—sweet and strong playing," playing "characterised by admirable precision," and fingers that "spread themselves on the keys like iridescent pearls." The book puts together a good deal of useful information, which would have been still more useful if the sources had been quoted. At the end is a list of Irish musicians, which includes, without giving any reasons, Garland, Dowland, Campion and Purcell.

The Violin and its Technique. By Achille Rivarde. Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net.

"To the progressive intelligence of young students" is the dedication the author puts to this very interesting description of an excellent method of violin teaching. The work, however, contains much more than some chapters on the technique of the violin, and old as well as young, not only violinists, but all musicians, will do well to read the latter portion on interpretation; indeed, it is "as a means to the interpretation of music" that the chapters on the technique are written; for instance, the author emphasises not so much the method of obtaining a vibrato as the necessity for employing different forms of vibrato which shall be suitable to the interpretation of various passages.

Coming, as it does, at the present time, which is, perhaps, the beginning of a new constructive era in music, this book may help to save us from someone who may be contemplating the idea of starting a new destructive era of interpretation.

G. H. J.

The Pertinent Wagnerite, and other Essays. By B. M. Steigmann. New York: Thomas Seltzer, pp. 128.

The first of these essays is described as "a guide for sensitive Americans, who may hereafter enjoy the dramas without patriotic uneasiness, when they discover that the Ring Cycle is Wagner's prophetic account of the world-war and international politics of to-day." The following two, less rich in polysyllabic humour, are devoted to showing how utterly Wagner's translations have failed in the impossible task of producing adequate translations of his poems. Then comes "Parsifolies," a more complicated affair, comprising a good deal of destructive, but sound criticism. It still requires courage to write that "the first and the third acts of *Parsifal* are at times simply wearisome" from the musical point of view as well as from the dramatic. And Mr. Steigmann is as courageous on that point as he is in his endeavour to interest us in "Kaiser Wilhelm Alberich," the "great German tank of a dragon," and all the other amenities of his "guide for sensitive Americans."

M. D. C.

Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent. By Natalie Curtis. Schirmer, Boston, pp. xxv., 170.

The authoress has put together what she learned, after a great deal of labour on the part of all concerned, from two African inmates of the Hampton Institute—Simango of the Ndaou and Cele of the Zulu tribe, members of the Bantu race which spread out southwards from the great lakes. From these were gleaned folk-lore, proverbs and songs, and the Hampton Institute provided the illustrations. The book shows signs of great care, and altogether the best has been done that could be, short of a visit to the country itself. The songs, with which we are here concerned, were a work of great difficulty, but "every word of the text and every note of the music was gone over hundreds of times."

The Chindau songs (Chindau is the language and Ndaou the tribe), occupy 48 and the Zulu 16 pages, and the latter is insufficient to give any trustworthy picture. The Chindau songs, however, are most interesting. The syncopation, for which negro songs are famous, is seen to be sometimes in the voice but more often in the drum rhythms (there are anything up to four drums, all in different metres but in a common rhythm). This helps to explain what Dr. Terry told us (*Music and Letters*, I., 42) about the silent tap of the foot (representing perhaps the time of the music) followed by the loud clap of the hands (hollowed, Mrs. Curtis says), representing the syncopation. Besides this "rhythmic" counterpoint there is "melodic." Two voices will sing approximately, but not quite, the same melody, and this grows into what looks at times like "*Organum*." The drums are occasionally tuned a fourth apart and consciously alternated, which suggests an analogy with Huchald's *Graves*, *Finales*, etc. One aspect of

the tunes is not touched upon—their intonation; but Simango, we are told, picked out his tunes on the piano and would sigh with disappointment and say, "This note is too high and the next one too low, and there is none between." In fact, the composition for "Household Band" which appears inside the cover of the February number of that excellent paper *Music and Youth* is a simple example of the African performance, and was suggested, no doubt, by the form in which it has percolated to this country, the syncopated orchestra.

Four Plays of Gil Vicente. Edited, with Translation and Notes, by Aubrey F. G. Bell. Cambridge University Press, 20s. net.

Gil Vicente, one of the greatest of Portuguese writers and musicians, holds also a place in Spanish literature. No less than eleven of his plays were written in Spanish, and two delightful songs by him are to be found in the "Oxford Book of Spanish Verse." The four plays edited by Mr. Aubrey Bell are, however, in Portuguese; they are printed from the *Editio Princeps* of 1562, with a parallel translation—the first, we believe, which has been made in our language. It is too often forgotten, and Mr. Bell does not make it clear, that Vicente belongs also to the history of music. It is generally stated that he composed the music for his own plays, and that his daughter, Paula, was a noted player upon the *vihuela*, the guitar of those days; but in these matters Mr. Bell does help us. In the "Pastoral Tragicomedy of Serra and Estrella" nearly all the characters "enter singing," while in the "Carriers' Comedy" one of them comes along the road singing snatches of a *pastorela* which is well known in old Spanish, as well as in old Portuguese poetry, and in modern Galician folk-song. Nothing very interesting happens in the play apart from the songs and music. It should not be impossible to discover the original melodies—the general style of composition would probably be like that of the early Spanish secular music given in Barbieri's "*Cancionera musical de los siglos XV y XVI*," and we hope that Mr. Bell, who has unrivalled knowledge and opportunities, will give more definite information on this point. The translation is on the whole adequate and does the different characters justice. But surely the jolly old hermit who wanted his penitential desert to yield corn and wine, with a fountain near at hand and contemplation far away, a pool full of fish and a bed of cedar wood in which to sleep far into the morning—surely he would never have hung a *harpsichord* at the head of his bed, even if they had been invented in those days, and even if he had borrowed the necessary tackle from Henry the Navigator! The word *crano*, which Mr. Bell translates "harpsichord," must mean a fiddle, a "crowd" or "crwth."

J. B. T.

MILITARY BANDS.

IN a letter which appeared in several papers last November, Colonel Somerville offered to rehearse and perform at Kneller Hall any original compositions or arrangements of classical music for military band that were accepted by two competent judges. Five were accepted, and the judges' first report is printed below as being of interest to musicians and possibly marking an epoch.

REPORT.

We have examined the twenty-six compositions for military bands sent us by Colonel Somerville and beg to report as follows:—

We decided from the outset that there was no reason why the standard of music for military bands should not be as high as that of works for orchestra.

Judging them on this basis, we are on the whole disappointed with the results. Most of the works are worthless, in our opinion, as music, and in many cases ineffectively scored. Indeed, none of the works sent in are of outstanding merit. In some cases the composer has obtained the services of some recognised master of the military band to score his composition for him. In these cases we should like to point out that their masterly instrumentation failed to save works which were inherently weak musically.

We hope that the promoters of this scheme will not be discouraged by the above results. Composers have still to realise that military band music is as well worth their serious attention as any other branch of the art.

A. WILLIAMS (Captain, Director of Music,
Grenadier Guards),

R VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS.

January 7, 1921.

NOTICE.

It is proposed to print in the July number of this magazine some translations of Schubert's songs, and, if these are welcomed, to go on later to other composers. The object is to form a nucleus from which, perhaps, a standard collection may eventually grow. The Editor will be grateful to any reader who will let him know of translations of Schubert already in print which sing really well. Any who would care to contribute translations of their own are asked to apply to the Manager, MUSIC AND LETTERS, 22, Essex Street, W.C. 2, for a paper of instructions.

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